

**free
car
mag**

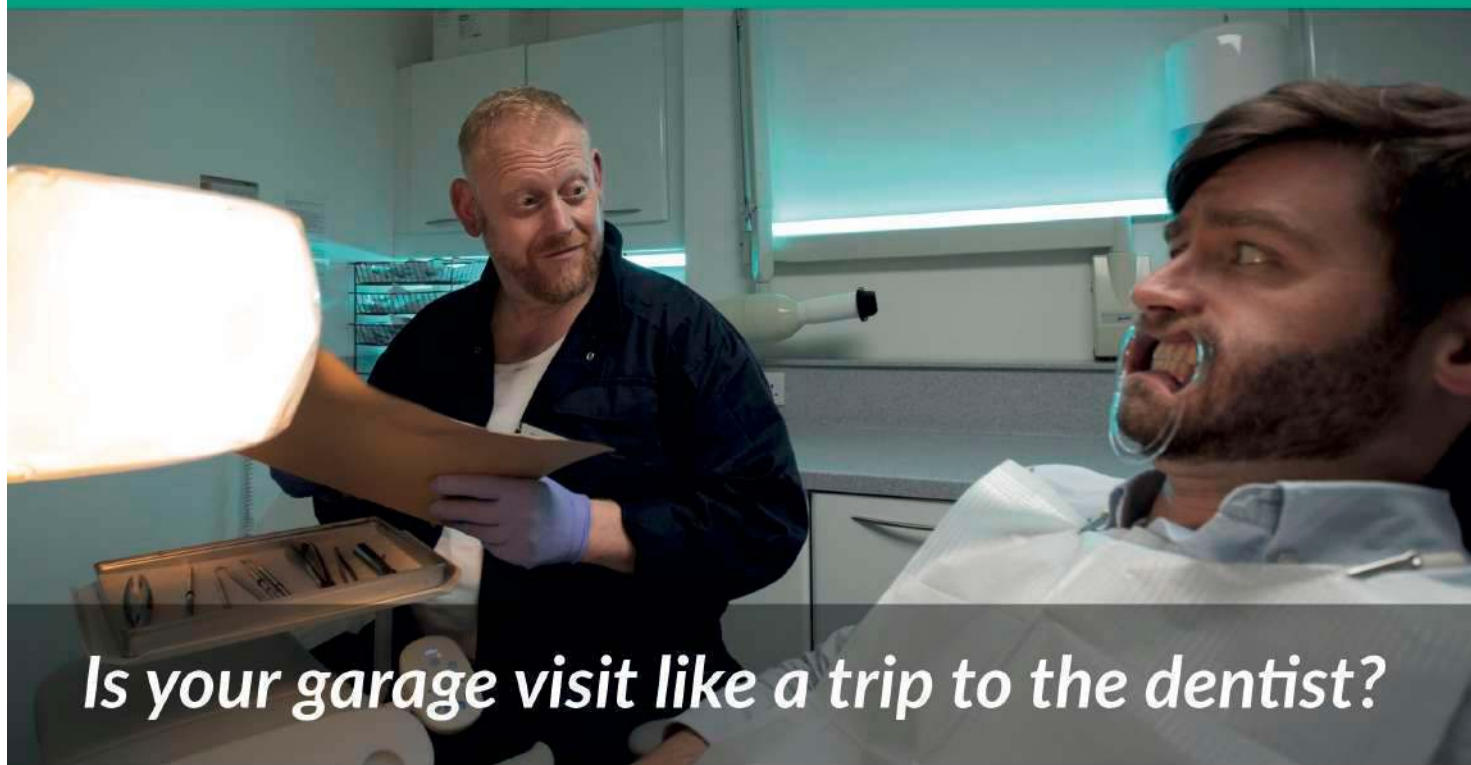
**Get the
Look**

Should you buy...
Communist
Chinese Cars?

& from companies
that work within the People's Republic?

We try on some ultra cool T-Shirts
with a distinctly Swedish theme
which might be turbocharged...

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freetorial

The great thing about being Free Car Mag is that we are just that, free. Free to write about what we please. Difficult things.

I was rather interested in what car manufacturers thought about operating in China. Sadly, in just about every instance, they had nothing to share with us, which was a shame. Right now cooperating with a Communist political system would not seem to be the most ethical thing to do. Indeed, unravelling themselves from a globalised system that has caused plenty of supply chain issues recently would be the smart, business thing to do. For the rest of us Bangernomics Mag (www.bangernomics.com) offers a positive way forward.

Instead, car manufacturers prefer to stay away from the really important issues. They could of course choose to be free. Meanwhile...say hello to Shazhad Sheikh who has been writing about and driving all the exciting cars for decades as #brownarguy. See you next time.

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British Olympic rider Pippa Funnell, is a former three-time winner of Badminton and former European Champion.



PIPPA FUNNELL MBE + THE NEW SSANGYONG REXTON

Double Top British horsewomen and member of the 2016 Olympic Team GB, Pippa Funnell MBE has taken delivery of her new SsangYong Rexton Ultimate. As a brand ambassador for SsangYong – which is Korea's oldest 4x4 and SUV specialist producer, Pippa represents the company at all the major equestrian events she attends. Pippa Funnell added: "I am really excited about driving the new model year Rexton and delighted to be continuing my relationship with SsangYong. In the equestrian world it is essential to have a reliable 4-wheel drive vehicle that's capable of towing a large horse or work trailer loaded with heavy jumps around the farm, and to get me to events often in wet, muddy conditions."



ALEX BRAGG TO REPRESENT SSANGYONG

Alex is ranked inside the top ten riders in the world and has achieved many top five placings at the pinnacle of the sport at level 5. Alex, who has featured on Rudall's round up on horse and country TV, as well as having other TV appearances, is hoping to enter aiming for the Zagreb Europeans in the summer, said; "I am really excited to support the SsangYong brand as they enter the equine market in the UK. I'm proud to be an ambassador and showcase the off road and towing capabilities of the Rexton and the Musso pick-up, which I believe will be invaluable to me when moving horses, and jumps and to get me to wet and muddy events in the winter!"

Spotted
in
Arjeplog
Sweden



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ANTHONY JOSHUA CELEBRATE GOLDEN JUBILEE

Arjeplog is also home to the Jaguar Land Rover Ice Academy, where customers experience the thrill of dynamic ice driving, under careful instruction from world-class driving experts. World heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua OBE experienced the extreme conditions as part of the celebrations, where he learned the art of winter driving under the expert supervision of Academy instructors. Obviously a lot of celebrations was planned for June, but it has been postponed for the time being.



PLAYMOBIL: THE MOVIE + PORSCHE MISSION E

Electric secret agent car: the Porsche Mission E sports car has a role in the animated family film from Playmobil. The concept car is the prototype for the first all-electric Porsche, the Taycan. In the movie, the character of secret agent Rex Dasher drives a white Mission E. This electric sports car that has a number of remarkable functions. In PLAYMOBIL: THE MOVIE, a girl called Marla has to bring home her younger brother Charlie after he disappears into an animated Playmobil universe. On her journey through new worlds, Marla encounters very different companions: a food truck owner, a robot, a fairy and Rex Dasher.



Extreme
Enduro



Get the look

ABARTH 595 AND LUPIN III: TOGETHER AGAIN

We found this down the back of the Free Car Mag sofa and simply could not resist it. Just in case you wondered, forty years after the immortal manga masterpiece "Lupin the Third: The Castle of Cagliostro", the world's most famous thief returns to the cinema with a spectacular new film, together with his inseparable Fiat 500. So this is a magnificent manga film that we are going to have to track down just to satisfy our own curiosity. We also wanted to satisfy our own need to be so sharply turned out. That's why this image is front and centre of our latest Get the Look. We will soon be asking for reader suggestions for these or we will just go back in the archive, for the moment though, let's get the manga inspired look.

Girl

- 1 Abarth 595 £18,764
- 2 Shoes - New Look £23.99
- 3 Necklace - Peacocks £7.00
- 4 Dress - Pretty Little Thing £17.99
- 5 Bracelet - Peacocks £4.00



Bloke

- 6 Jacket - House of Fraser £40.00
- 7 Shirt - Debenhams £12.00
- 8 Trousers - H&M £14.99
- 9 Tie - Ties R Us £7.99
- 10 Hat - Party 365.com £5.59
- 11 Shoes - Shoe Zone £16.99
- 12 Belt - Asos £14.00



China Crisis



LIFAN 320

Not a MINI, just one of many Chinese rip offs, at least this had a go at imagining what a four door might look like.

Communism is a terrible way to run a country and should not be encouraged. Yet Western consumers seem quite happy to buy from a system that is cruel to its people and doesn't care about the rest of the world. That's everything from rubbish in the pound shop to iPhones and cars. Is it time we changed?

COMMUNIST CHINA'S PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY...

LIBERATING PEOPLE FROM THEIR FREEDOM

makeameme.org

Should we care about where our cars are made? Mostly it is irrelevant. Like most consumer goods, the factory where it is made in means nothing to the end user. The product just has to be affordable, that usually means cheap, and be able to do the job. Very few buyers will be concerned about the factory conditions or that country's regime. It is after all, just a car.

Except that cars are special. Quite often they are bought to make a point. Make us feel special. They are not cheap either. It isn't like buying a pair of cheap pants that might survive a couple of hot washes. We want to feel good about ourselves and quite possibly make a statement to our next door neighbours, as well as get our shopping in the boot.

So if you were aware that the conditions under which your vehicle was made is dangerous and possibly oppressive you might have cause for concern. A case in point would be a car made under the watchful eye of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Unfortunately for the Chinese people the CCP has murdered, bullied and mistreated them since 1st October 1949. In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward that aimed to rapidly transform China's economy from agrarian to industrial, which led to the deadliest famine in history and the deaths of tens of millions of people between 1958 and 1962. So many that there are no accurate figures. If you were taught in school that the Nazis were bad, well Communism as an ideology has killed a staggering number of people who were not prepared to go along with it.

That is tragic and terrible, but it was a generation ago. What about right now? Well, don't take our word for it you can check this out for yourselves.

Let's take a look at Human Rights Watch own World Report 2020. According to Executive Director Kenneth Roth, "China's government sees human rights as an existential threat. Its reaction could pose an existential threat to the rights of people worldwide.

"At home, the Chinese Communist Party, worried that permitting political freedom would jeopardize its grasp on power, has constructed an Orwellian high-tech surveillance state and a sophisticated internet censorship system to monitor and suppress public criticism. Abroad, it uses its growing economic clout to silence critics and to carry out the most intense attack on the global system for enforcing human rights since that system began to emerge in the mid- 20th century."

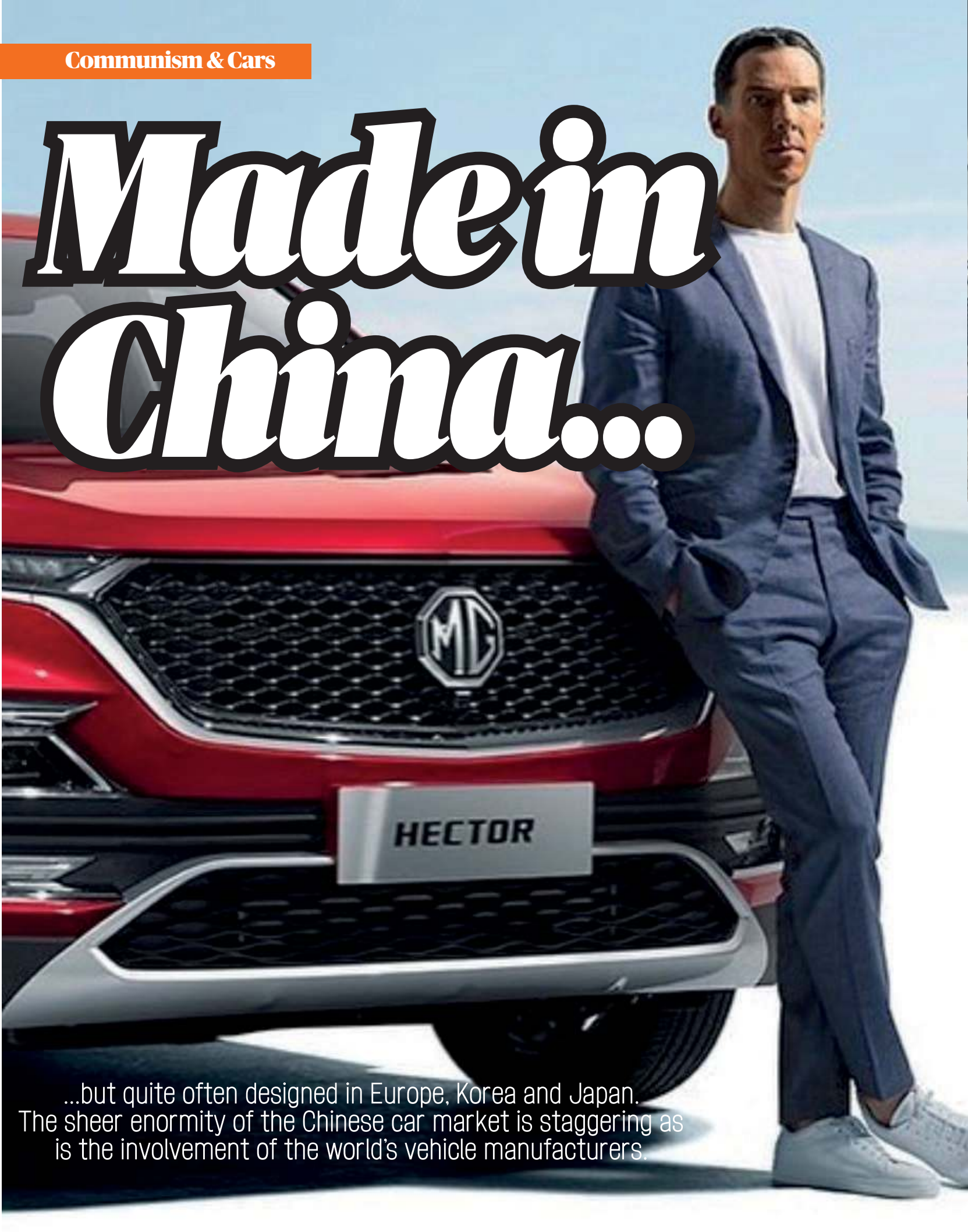
If you want details, there is a huge amount of terrible events to dig through and let's consider a few of the current issues that the CCP have created. There's Religious persecution, especially of Christians and Uyghur and Kazakh ethnic Muslims. That has resulted in reeducation camps, essentially prisons where indigenous languages and religion is drummed out of the people. To keep a lid on it all there is the social credit system, which is essentially Big Brother. Credit scores are assigned to each individual based on their behaviour, which are translated into a variety of rewards and punishments. Mostly punishments, such as restrictions on travel and employment. Then there is Hong Kong and Tibet...

China, as run by the CCP in 2020 is very much Georges Orwell's 1984. "Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right."

One might question why European, Japanese and American car manufacturers would choose to co-operate with Chinese companies especially if they are directly linked to the state.

Please turn over...

Made in China...



...but quite often designed in Europe, Korea and Japan.
The sheer enormity of the Chinese car market is staggering as
is the involvement of the world's vehicle manufacturers.



The Chinese car market is quite simply, the biggest in the world accounting for 28 million vehicle sales, so that's why the majority of the largest car makers have been there for years. In order to enter that market they are required to partner with local and state owned businesses.

Last year in February the ties between Europe, the number two car market and China became stronger when at a summit held in Brussels the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) and the Chinese Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) – signed a cooperation agreement.

Speaking at the time, the "ACEA's 15 members are truly global companies, with a strong presence in China and other world regions. China is also the number two destination for EU passenger car exports," said Erik Jonnaert, ACEA Secretary General. "That is why we strongly believe in further strengthening the ties between our associations. Today's signing of the agreement is a landmark moment in this process."

Dong Yang, CAAM Executive Vice-Chairman also commented: "So that the Chinese auto industry can continue to flourish, we need to strengthen our policies, standards and regulations. To this end, we are seeking extensive international cooperation to align our industry more strongly with the global market. Our cooperation with ACEA is extremely important, as it will enable us to learn from Europe's mature standards and regulation system. This partnership will be of mutual benefit to the Chinese and European automobile industries."

There you have it, this is a global industry and the companies involved all want to work together to make money. They don't care about the countries where they are nominally based, or work in. Obviously we asked for comments about the way China is run from all the European, Japanese and Korean companies involved as well as ACEA. Where relevant we detail the responses. Most though saw it as a political issue so refused to make any comment. Surely the issues raised by China's behaviour is fundamentally a moral one? It isn't political because it is not as if there any alternative parties to vote for in an election. Not least because there are no such things in China.

Just as the phrase 'Blood Diamonds' is attributed to precious

stones mined in a war zone, so surely there should be an equivalent for cooperating with an oppressive regime, such as a 'Commie Red Cars?'

It is up to consumers to change their buying habits and demand the companies they deal with change the way they operate. Never mind vehicles, Apple iPhones and computers are also part of the problem. Global companies, despite what they like to tell us in corporate videos, advertisements and press activities about how much they care about humankind, actually don't. This is especially true if they continue to do business with the Communist Party of China.

Consumers have to question the origins of goods they are buying. Boycott those companies if they do not like the answer and let them know why they are refusing to buy. After that they have to tell friends, neighbours and family that they are making a principled stand. It is possible to take it further and that would be letting their members of Parliament know what they are doing.

Sister publication Bangernomics Mag has some constructive suggestions to make in the current automotive climate over what can be done to support the indigenous British car industry: www.bangernomics.com

Here is a brief and not exactly comprehensive round up of the Chinese car industry and companies they do business with.

SAIC - 1955

Here is one of China's largest state-owned car makers originally making saloons for middle order Communist party officials. The joint venture that changed everything was with Volkswagen, which gained the largest foothold in what wasn't even an emerging market at the time, 1984. American General Motors linked up with them in 1997. They managed to acquire Morris Garages, better known as MG by taking over Nanjing Automobile Group. Previously assembled in Birmingham from kits, these cars are now produced in China. The UK based press office has nothing to say about anything.

Made in China



CHANGAN AUTOMOBILE GROUP 1862

Here's a state owned company, which is considerably older than the Communist regime. It goes all the way back to the Qing dynasty, but the important period is right now. It produces cars under its own and Hafei names has a bunch of joint ventures with Citroen, DS, Ford, Mazda and Peugeot.

When asked to comment on their operations in China, there was no response from any of the European, American companies or Mazda. The PSA Groups are ending their loss making association with Changan, but not pulling out of China.

However Suzuki have partially retreated from the market when they transferred their equity in Changan back to the company in September 2018. They still license the production and sale of Suzuki models. Incidentally, Changan have a research and development centre in Birmingham in order to develop models for the European market.



BAIC - 1958

Beijing Automotive Industry Holding Company was right there at the beginning of the shift from agriculture to making cars is State owned BAIC. As well as making their own brand vehicles. They have had joint venture agreements with Hyundai and Mercedes. Neither company wanted to comment on this relationship. They produce their own versions of the Mercedes E and A Class. They also bought the rights to make Saab vehicles.



北京汽车

CHERY - 1997

Claims to be the first Chinese automotive brand started with Government help. It has a brace of brands including Rely and Riich, but is now best known for its joint venture with Tata Motors for the production of Jaguar and Land Rover. There was no comment.



3

-NEW BMW 3 SERIES



BRILLIANCE AUTO GROUP - 1992

The origins go way back to the late '50s and a humble repair shop. Then they built Toyota related minibuses a production association that continues today. They have Jinbei and Huasong brands, but it is Brilliance, which gets all the attention with close ties to BMW. Their joint venture from 2003 results in Chinese versions of the 1,2,3 and 5 Series as well as the X1. There is also a Joint venture to manufacture and sell light commercial vehicles under the Jinbei, Renault and Huasong brands.



GREAT WALL 1984

Commercial vehicle maker, which went on to make most of China's SUVs. They have assembly plants around the world including, Russia and Bulgaria. In 2018 they made an agreement with BMW to produce electric versions of the MINI.



广汽集团
GAC GROUP

GAC - 1955

Now in the top six of Chinese car makers it has an awful lot of joint ventures. It sells its own cars as Trumpchi although the first one in 2010 was actually an Alfa Romeo 166 underneath. So along with its relationship with the Fiat Group, they also produce Honda, Isuzu, Mitsubishi and Toyota models.

Made in China



DONGFENG MOTOR CORPORATION - 1969

One of the largest Chinese state-owned manufacturers, with headquarters in Wuhan, which has been in the news recently. It has links that go right to the top of the Communist party tree to the leader at the time, Mao Zedong. The idea was to make this company a crucial part of the Communist party's Third Front industrial strategy to protect the country from foreign invasion. Interesting that they now have so many joint ventures with European and Japanese companies. As well as their own sub brands, they have relationships with Honda, Kia, Nissan, Renault and the PSA Group. None of these companies wanted to comment.



FAW (FIRST AUTOMOBILE WORKS) - 1953

This is supposed to be China's oldest car manufacturer and is one of the largest of the state owned operations. They were early to the joint venture game when in 1990 they linked up with Volkswagen. The current Hongqi L5 V12 is impossibly cool to look at and was the car made for senior Communist party officials.

As well as VW, Audi, General Motors, Mazda and Toyota. Toyota had nothing to say but just issued a statement (April 20th 2020) that the Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) will restructure their management systems with the aim of achieving sustainable growth in China. The details are very boring indeed.

VW did not want to comment, but via Audi they were much more forthcoming by issuing the following statement.

"Globally the Volkswagen Group takes its corporate human rights responsibilities seriously. We comply with all national laws within the framework of international requirements and, in the event of deviations, seek dialogue and examine measures within the scope of influence possible as a company.

"We represent and live our own ethical values in China and ensure that our work with all our factories, distribution companies and suppliers is based on our principles, which include respect for minorities, employee representation and social and labor standards. We are committed to our responsibility in all areas of our business where we hold direct authority.

"Audi's long term commitment to China has not changed at all. Audi has long-term confidence in China's role in shaping global mobility."



G E E L E Y - 1 9 8 6

This is an interesting one. Geely, officially known as Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co. Ltd, were originally makers of fridges. It moved into motorcycles and scooters and eventually built their own versions of Daihatsu Charades from 1999. It was all very well to create anonymously badged vehicles, but they realised that buying established brands was the shortcut to making a truly global impact. They bought Volvo in 2010 from Ford and have controlling interests in LEVC who make the iconic London black cab and Lotus amongst others. They have also established Polestar and Lynk & Co to make battery vehicles aimed at the Western buyer. Oh yes and they also have a large shareholding in Mercedes-Benz owner, Daimler. When it comes to employment and visibility, Geely are the most European of all the Chinese manufacturers. Despite this they don't have anything to say about the Communist regime under which they ultimately operate.



F I N A L L Y . . . W I T H A D D E D T E S L A

We have only scratched the surface of the Chinese car industry as Hyundai have associations with Hawtai and JAC. Jiangling make a version of the Ford Transit. There are also electric vehicle joint ventures such as Denza with Daimler and Zinoro with BMW. Actually when it comes to EVs Tesla have begun production of vehicles at their Tesla Giga Shanghai factory, delivering Model 3s from December 2019. These are for the Chinese market so that they don't attract tariffs if exported to the USA. Indeed, the whole issue of electric cars and the sourcing of rare earth materials for electric cars, which mainly come from China, should be open to question. Meanwhile, the mainstream motoring car manufacturers seem happy to work within the constraints applied to them by the Chinese Communist party. Worth remembering when you are considering your next brand new car purchase.



Wonder World



Kiran Parmar visited Mercedes Benz World in Surrey



If you love cars, then you will adore visiting Mercedes-Benz World with your family. There are three floors of attractions and interesting exhibits. In addition to this, you can arrange to have a driving experience or passenger ride in a variety of different Mercedes-Benz and AMG vehicles. The site has its own impressive Handling Circuit and a ten-acre off-road course where you can put your driving skills to the test. There are also specialised driving experiences for under-17s. Passenger rides start from £35 and driving experiences start from £50 where you can drive a A-Class, B-Class or B-Class Electric for 30 minutes and go all the way up to £875 where you will drive a variety of AMG vehicles and then the 4 litre twin turbo V8 GT R.

Inside the museum you will see a vast number of different vehicles on display. It was really fascinating to see a replica of the famous 1885 Benz Motorwagen, the car that started everything and is widely regarded as the world's first production automobile.

Another interesting historic vehicle on display was the 4 cylinder 1917 Benz 8/20 which has a distinctive boat tail rear end and wooden body panels.

A car I absolutely fell in love with was a beautiful 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL 'Gullwing' (W198). Only 1,400 examples were built between 1954 to 1957. This car features a 2996cc litre six-cylinder engine producing 212 bhp. The straight-six engine was the first four-stroke petrol engine to have fuel injection and could take the car to 161 mph, making it the fastest production car of its era. This car was extremely light weight thanks to its tubular steel spaceframe chassis, for this reason it was given the designation 'SL' which stood for 'Sport Leicht' or 'Sport Lightweight.'



Photography by Kiran Parmar www.kiranparmar.photography



Based closely on the 1952 race cars, the tubular chassis design meant gull wing-type doors were the only way the doors could operate. This particular car belongs to Mercedes-Benz World and has successfully competed in the Mille Miglia race in Italy four times in recent years. If you prefer more modern Mercedes-Benz high performance sports cars there are plenty on display including the AMG GT C and the SLS AMG. If you are a F1 fan you will be pleased to hear that there are several F1 cars on display including Mika Hakkinen's 1999 F1 McLaren, Lewis Hamilton's 2007 McLaren Mercedes, and a historic 1973 John Surtees TS14 F1 car. Sticking with F1, there is a stunning display of a Mercedes GP Petronas Grand Prix car exploded into hundreds of pieces hanging in the air on pieces of wire.

Finally, from the historic to the future, there is an incredible concept car on display called the Mercedes-Benz F200 'Imagination' coupe. This car was first unveiled at the 1996 Paris Motor Show and the aim of this concept car was to show off innovation in control, design and comfort in passenger cars. Instead of a steering wheel and pedals, it features a joystick and 'butterfly doors' instead of conventional ones and many other features that are now standard on most modern Mercedes cars such as bi-xenon headlights.

The Mercedes-Benz world is a brilliant museum and one I will definitely be visiting again.

**For more information www.mercedes-benzworld.co.uk/
To see the complete gallery of photos I took at the MB World, visit: www.kiranparmar.photography/free-car-mag**



McLAREN GT'S UNIQUE AND HIGH-TECH INTERIOR MATERIALS

A new McLaren Tech Club film looks at the materials used

McLaren is committed to pursuing lightweight solutions across all aspects of design and engineering and the interior of the GT is no exception. A new material called SuperFabric®, originally designed for military and aerospace applications, is available as a covering for the floor of the luggage bay. This innovative woven fabric is infused with a layer of tiny armoured guard plates, providing increased resistance to stains, cuts, nicks and abrasions. Breathable, easy to clean and quick to dry, the surface of the SuperFabric® is embossed with a hexagonal pattern to provide optimal protection.

This single-minded approach to lightweighting extends to more traditional cabin materials with McLaren adopting a contemporary approach to achieve the brand's design philosophy of 'everything for a reason', bringing fashion and lifestyle inspirations to the finest materials and developing new exclusive colourways. The supple Nappa leather offered as

standard in the GT can be upgraded to softgrain luxury leather or Alcantara® but regardless of owner preference all of the fine leathers used in the GT are sourced from Scotland's Bridge of Weir company. Alternatively, cashmere is available in either Dove Grey or Jet Black as one of the most exclusive options from McLaren Special Operations (MSO), the chic fabric featuring on the seats and key 'touchpoints' in the cabin. McLaren is the first car manufacturer to offer the softest and most luxurious of wools in a production version supercar.

Watch <https://cars.mclaren.com/en/latest/post/tech-club-6-gt-materials>



Have your say  @freecarmag1



Driving lessons for under 17s are growing in popularity, with the UK's largest provider of driving tuition for 10 to 17 year olds delivering its 750,000th lesson late last year, giving 10,000 more lessons in 2019 than in the previous year.

The scheme, Young Driver, aims to extend the learning period, reducing the high number of accidents newly qualified drivers have when they first pass their test. But could getting youngsters behind the wheel at an earlier age also provide a valuable boost to their general self-esteem and wellbeing?

When parents were asked what worried them most about the pressures on teenagers in the modern world, one in four of the 1,000 surveyed by Young Driver (24 per cent) said a lack of genuine self-confidence.

Research also revealed that one in five people (19 per cent) booking a Young Driver lesson said they were doing so to help improve a young person's general confidence levels.

www.youngdriver.com



MOKKACCINO



The next Vauxhall Mokka generation is a completely new design based on the company's highly efficient CMP multi-energy platform (Common Modular Platform). This modular platform offers maximum flexibility in vehicle development. The CMP also allows the use of purely battery-electric drive as well as internal combustion engines. The customer has the choice. Thanks to the use of high-strength steels, the vehicle weight is low and the body stability is high. The new Mokka weighs up to 120 kilograms less than the previous model – with almost the same wheelbase and tyre sizes. With the electric Mokka-e, the batteries are installed deep in the vehicle floor, which lowers the centre of gravity and at the same time increases torsional rigidity by a further 30 per cent – excellent prerequisites for dynamic driving. The development cars are still hiding behind a green and black camouflage, with 3D-like graphics that blur the vehicle's contours. The engineer behind the steering wheel has come to the far north to set up the chassis. Like every Vauxhall, the new Mokka must respond precisely to steering inputs and give good feedback, be comfortable and at the same time have a firm enough ride. A Vauxhall must not display uncontrolled body movements, for example, when the vehicle is driving over a large bump at medium speed. The Vauxhall philosophy calls for safe and relaxing driving on the motorway. A Vauxhall must remain easily controllable in all situations and be fun to drive at the same time.

These characteristics must be present under all weather conditions everywhere – at the icy Arctic Circle as well as in high summer at the Mediterranean.

The Mokka will be available in Vauxhall dealerships from early 2021. Until then, the testing continues at full speed.



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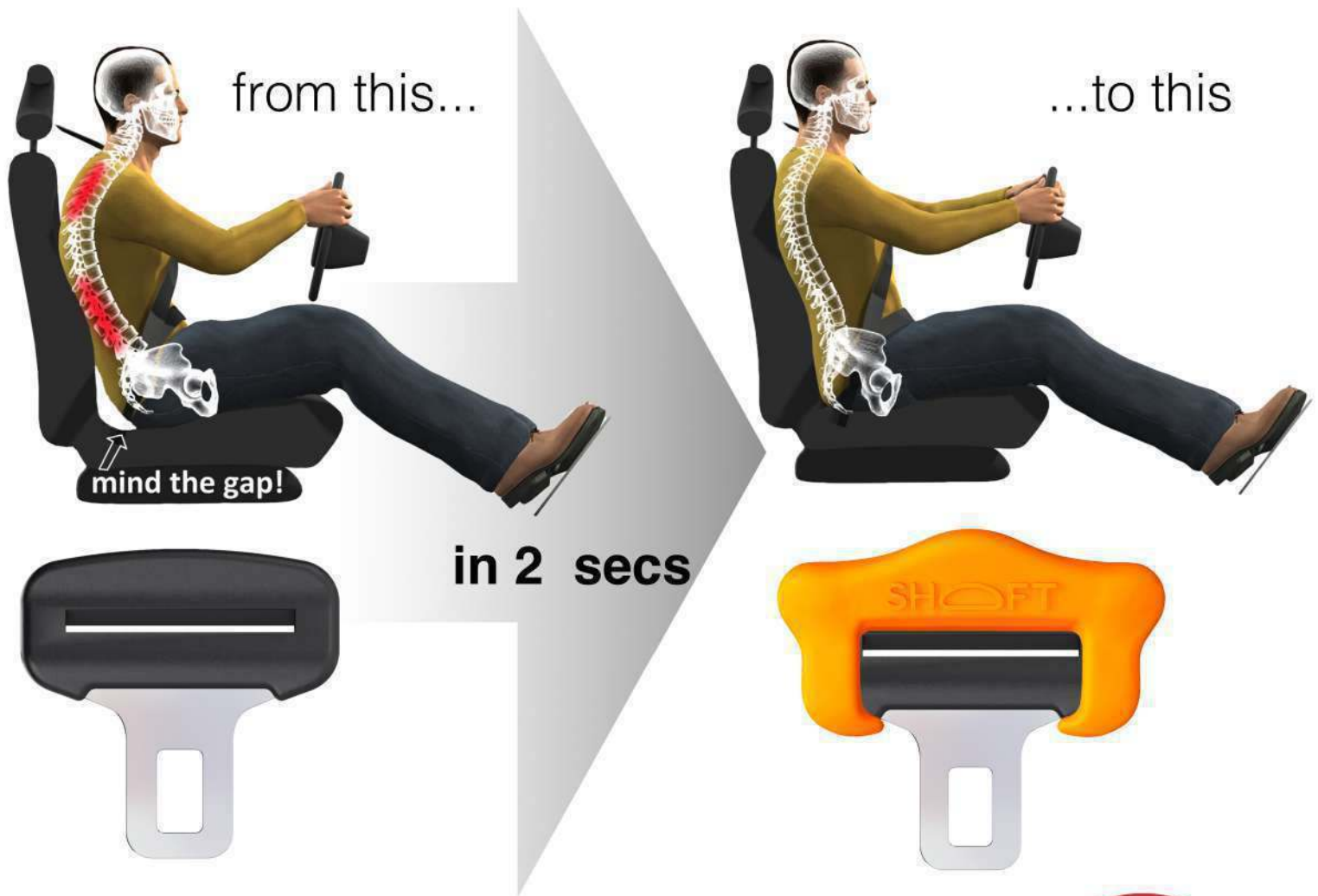
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Updated SUV Range

KIA SPORTAGE

Kia is making a series of updates to its Sportage range, with a new streamlined four trim level line-up. The most significant change is the introduction of a new '3' grade, joining '2', 'GT-Line' and 'GT-Line S' specifications.

All versions in the latest Sportage range are well equipped which includes alloy wheels, heated front and outer rear seats, dual automatic air conditioning, privacy glass, an auto-dimming rear-view mirror, rain sensing front wipers, automatic light control, electrically folding, adjustable and heated door mirrors and cruise control with speed limiter.

There are three engines available on the Kia Sportage, a 1.6-litre T-GDi (the Turbocharged) engine, a non turbo plus diesel variants with mild-hybrid technology are also offered. Meanwhile the top-of-the-range 'GT-Line S' model has adaptive cruise control, a panoramic sunroof, 10-way power adjustable driver and 8-way adjustable front passenger seats. Comfy.





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SHAPPS ANNOUNCES £2 BILLION WAR ON DRIVERS



EVERY CITY IN THE UK TO BE MADE A TRAFFIC HELL LIKE LONDON

Grant Shapps announced £2 billion to supposedly enhance walking and cycling, but when he expounded the detail it was clear that this amounted to yet more gridlock and bullying for motorists of the type we have unfortunately got used to in London.

Pavements will be widened, cycle lanes introduced, roads will be closed – yet Shapps had the effrontery to suggest that a 5% increase in cycling would benefit motorists by reducing congestion. Not if there are 50% less roads, it won't, Grant. Do the maths.

And while drivers are bullied with ridiculous speed limits, an expansion of electric scooters is simultaneously mooted – devices capable of breaking urban speed limits but which have no effective braking, crash protection or licensing requirements. This shows that road safety is a sham – just an excuse to make driving unpleasant and stressful and so discourage it. The result is that getting about in any motor vehicle – car, delivery van, tradesman, taxi – in our cities is going to become a total 24/7 nightmare in every city in the UK.

The excuse for this was the recent shutdown, but it's clear that these disgraceful measures will be permanent. Talk about taking advantage of a crisis to reduce people's freedom. So soon after the VE Day celebrations and we've already forgotten why we fought World War 2.

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REVIEW BMW 840 M Sport Gran Coupe



WATCH MY VIDEO REVIEW OF THIS CAR



Back in 2011, BMW launched a new 6 Series. The coupe and convertible were nice enough, but it was the four-door 'Gran Coupe' that joined the range a little later which really fascinated me. It was a stunner, its streamlined elegance somehow even prettier than the coupe. Astonishingly, practicality was not greatly compromised, so it rather made the 5 Series, and for that matter the pudgy 7 Series, a bit redundant.

So, has BMW done it again? The four-door Gran Coupe version of the latest 8 Series was introduced just towards the end of last year and we had an opportunity to drive the 840i M Sport version - in fact that's the entry-level car and it kicks off with the M Sport trim, because that's what most

BMW customers order anyway.

Prices start at £69,340 for the car we drove, with the 840d xDrive at £73,915 and the M850i xDrive at £97,720. That range-topper has a 530bhp V8 offering a 0-62mph acceleration time of 3.9 seconds, while the diesel has 320bhp and will achieve 62mph in a still impressive 5.1 seconds. Both are all-wheel drive and the top speed of all three is limited to 155mph.

This 840i petrol serves up 340bhp, but only sends power to the rear wheels via the same 8-speed paddleshift transmission as its brothers. Slightly less grip off the line is probably why acceleration to 62mph is 0.1 second slower than the diesel at 5.2.

There isn't a vast difference when it comes to fuel economy between the two: the petrol

achieves up to 38.2mpg whilst the diesel will return 45.6mpg - though that might be crucial if you do a lot of long-distance drives. CO2 emissions too are about the same at 168g/km for the petrol and 162g/km for the diesel. If you really must know, the 850 will manage up to 28.5mpg and puts out 229g/km.

The Gran Coupe is identical to the coupe up to the windscreen which is slightly more upright. It has a 201mm longer wheelbase to better accommodate the rear passengers (potentially three of them as BMW calls this a '4+1') resulting in an overall length increase of 231mm - it's just over 5m long. It's 30mm wider at 1932mm and 61mm taller (1407), and at the rear the track increases by 28mm (the widest of any current BMW) which helps with that +1. However thanks to clever changes like a plastic boot lid, weight has only increase by 70kg.

Because of the extra millimetres of space, sitting in the rear is no chore even for the tallest of passengers and it is, as you'd expect, a superbly cossetting environment. Upfront there is more opulence but combined with carefully judged usability, and that gorgeous cut-crystal

style gear shift alone feels like it's worth the entry price!

Get comfortable quickly, and put your foot down - this makes a hell of a growl and the 5.2 seconds will feel like 2.5 as this thing catapults at the horizon. It's girth seems to narrow even on tight roads as you intuitively start to push it harder and harder - it's what happens when you're in a good BMW, and this definitely falls into that category.

Despite its astonishing attack-mode body composure, it will equally do serene and refined, and whilst the steering might not quite have the eloquence of a M2, it is faithful and reassuring, as are the brakes.

There is very little to not like about this car, even in this 'base' form - which already offers more performance than you could ever use. Okay it's pricey, but that's not a surprise, and it could be a little nerve wracking squeezing it through inner city traffic (we only drove it on motorways and A- and B-roads). Overall though it remains true to the remarkable achievement of the previous 6 Series Gran Coupe, and that is to make its 5 and 7 siblings way less desirable.

**BROWN
CARGUY
SAYS...**



Cars are cool again!

For years the automobile has been widely demonised, vilified and condemned by... well everyone really, from governments to environmentalists - could it be the one thing they actually agree on? Incidentally shipping pollutes more than cars do. And while road accidents in the UK do mean over 26,000 people are killed or seriously injured each year, smoking takes nearly 80,000 lives.

But whilst the clamour to kill the car appears to have grown in recent memory, it seems the motor vehicle will get a reprieve thanks to the most unlikely of causes. Current situation has forced people rethink how they get around, and the thought of sharing space with others on public transport has become less than appealing. Car-sharing is out too, as are driverless cars.

People now want their own vehicle again - more than 50% of licence holders that don't own a car, now want to get one. So the automotive renaissance has begun. The car is dead, long live the car.

There is a brand new third generation Kia Soul and henceforth it will only be available in electric vehicle guise, borrowing its components from E-Niro. It retains the signature design and look now associated with the Soul, albeit in a crisper, sharper more up-to-date form.

Initially the Soul EV is offered in this well-equipped 'First Edition' guise priced from £33,795. It deploys 201bhp from a 64Kw motor which also supplies an impressive 395Nm of torque mated to a 1-speed (yes ONE speed) transmission. It weighs 1757kg with the batteries placed under the passenger cabin and providing a range of 280 miles (up to 400 miles in city driving). It can be charged to 80% in 75 minutes.

With a 315-litre boot that expands to a cavernous 1339-litres with the seats folded down, and featuring

REVIEW 2020 Kia Soul EV

rear underfloor storage, it'll happily transport all your stuff around. Any concerns that the batteries might have robbed the cabin of room are instantly dismissed, thanks to 80mm extra length and being 30mm wider.

Thanks to available torque, off the line it will even overcome the traction control systems and momentarily spin its wheels. Kia quotes a 0-62mph acceleration time 7.6 seconds, but it feels quicker. The brakes are bitey

and efficient aided by regeneration technology - helping to keep the battery charged. There's three modes for this system operated by paddles on the steering wheel. Around town on the highest setting it significantly reduces the amount of braking you need.

The Soul EV employs fully independent multi-link rear suspension, a lower centre of gravity due to the placement of the batteries, a wider track, tighter suspension and a sports mode that not only turns up throttle response but also sharpens the steering. Result? The new Soul is a remarkably poised, engaging and even entertaining drive. Around town it's easy to place and manage, on the motorway it's serene and stable. The ride is good too.

Kia's electric Soul not only makes a solid case for a reasonably usable EV, but also presents an enticing and desirable offering.



WATCH MY VIDEO REVIEW OF THIS CAR



FCM 85

We feel ourselves coming over all rather retro in the next issue. There should be a bunch of interesting old vehicles and people driving them. Starting with a BMW Isetta and an old fella wearing a pair of bins. Whatever actually happens we look forward to seeing you next time...



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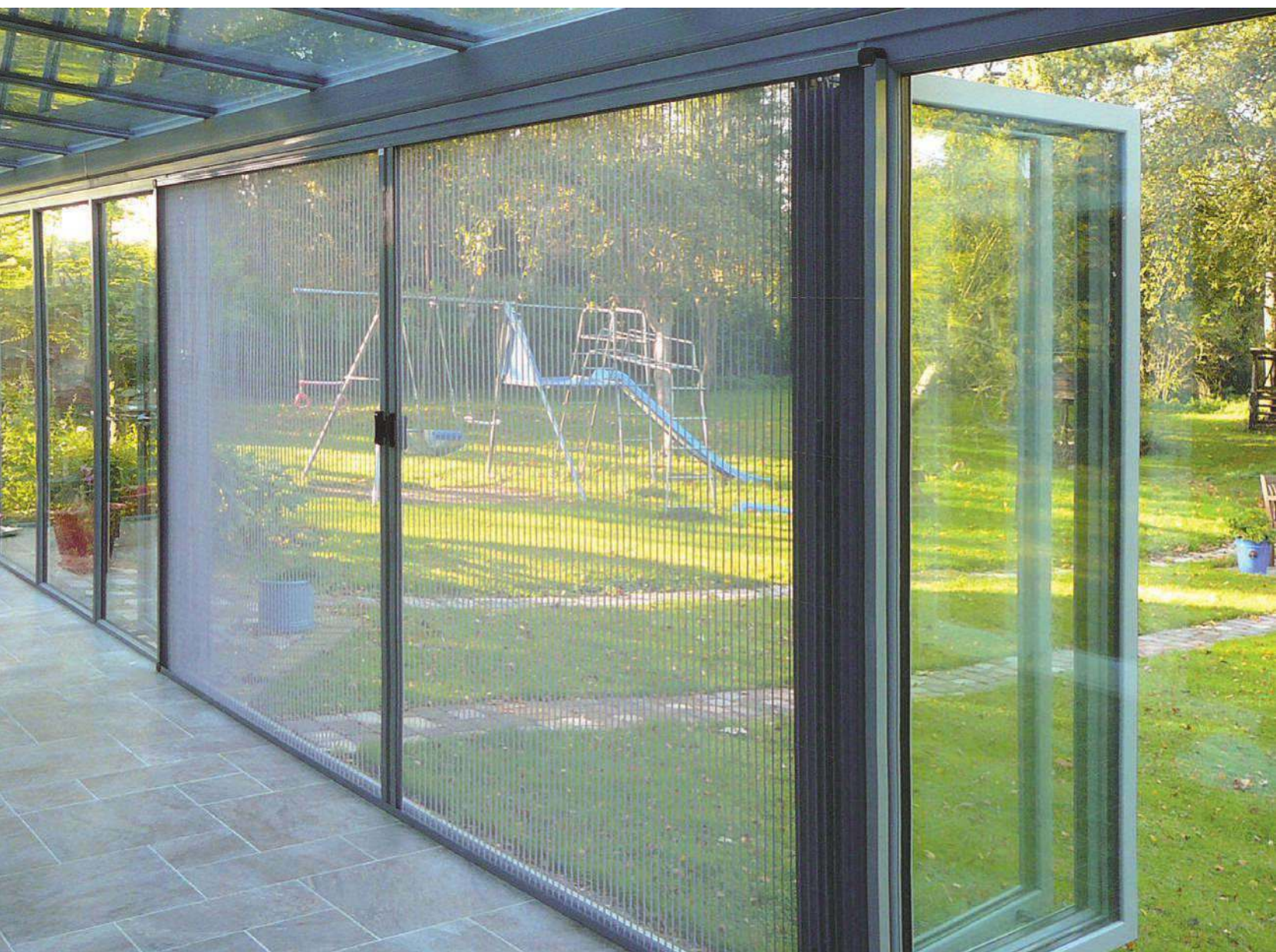


All the Motorist wants to do is finish their journey, get to work, or visit their mum. Trouble is, there's an ultra low emission zone, or a new road toll to contend with. Meanwhile, some soft headed climate extinction protesters have glued themselves to the dual carriageway. Not only that, the Motorists' car is subject to a manufacturer recall because the exhaust emissions were tested on the wrong sort of monkey. They have been Demotorized.

Motorists have been under attack from all sides ever since they proved it was possible to make your own way in the world behind the wheel of a self-propelled vehicle in 1803. Whether it is the government, international busy bodies, or someone wearing Lycra, Demotorization is their aim. Meanwhile, Toad of Toad Hall, has joined the Gilets Jaunes...



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