

SPECIAL REPORT: MOTORING

# Centre stage for premieres

**Annual Guangzhou** Auto Show sees debuts of vehicles made in China and latest electric models, writes **Mark Andrews**

The Guangzhou Auto Show is the second-largest car show on the mainland and, unlike the biggest – which alternates each year between Beijing and Shanghai – it takes place annually. Opening last week at the vast China Import and Export Fair Pazhou Complex, best known for hosting the Canton Trade Fair, the show coincided with the Los Angeles show and came a month after Tokyo's.

Infiniti took advantage of the scheduling to simultaneously launch its QX30 crossover in Los Angeles and Guangzhou. It showcases the first fruits of Infiniti's collaboration with Mercedes and rests on the same platform as the GLA, and in the case of the 2.0T petrol version uses the same drivetrain.

"The QX30 active crossover is joining our new premium compact family at the right time and will broaden our offer to new customers around the world," says Roland Krüger, president of Infiniti.

Qoros was meant to debut its new 5 SUV at Guangzhou, but had already shown it a month earlier at the Milan Expo fashion show. While sales figures are picking up for Qoros, they are still very low, so the 5 is a desperately needed addition to get people into showrooms. But while looking the part, it only has front-wheel drive, and still relies on the same 1.6 and 1.6T units that power the Qoros 3. With the added weight, this is likely to leave the 5 SUV underpowered.



Infiniti staged the simultaneous launch of its QX30 crossover, a collaboration with Mercedes, at the Guangzhou Auto Show and the Los Angeles Auto Show last week.



The annual Guangzhou Auto Show is the second-largest car show held on the mainland.

There were other premieres from international carmakers, but all are likely to be China-only models. BMW's Concept Compact Sedan hides a near-production-ready 1 or 2 Series saloon. Insiders at BMW claim this car will not be offered in Europe or Australia, and is likely to be only for the Chinese market, which traditionally favours small saloons over hatchbacks.

DS has designs on China being its premier market. The company dropped the Citroen part of the name here before doing so in Europe. The DS 4S is similar in looks to the Peugeot

## Powerful partnership



Porsche and Jebsen Group marked the 60th anniversary of their partnership in Hong Kong with a celebration at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal this month, where 1,500 Porsche owners and VIPs were invited. Franz Jung, president and CEO of Porsche China, says: "Hong Kong is one of the most important markets in the world for Porsche, and it is integral to our continued success and growth throughout China". Hans Michael Jebsen, chairman of Jebsen Group, notes there are 10 Porsche Centres across mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau. "I am looking forward to another 60 years of cooperation with Porsche," he says. Jebsen also unveiled the exclusive 911 Carrera GTs-Jebsen 60th Anniversary Edition at the event. Photo: Jonathan Wong

308, which is not surprising as it shares the same platform.

Chevrolet's Lova RV is a China-only small hatchback targeted at younger buyers and suited for a leisure lifestyle. The Verano hatchback and performance-oriented Verano GS, both based on the Opel Astra, made their debut on GM's Buick stand.

To celebrate 10 years in China, Lamborghini is offering the Huracan Zhong. Based on the LP610-4, it is limited to 50 cars and is available for 3.5 million yuan (HK\$4.2 million) – a discount of 790,000 yuan over the regular price. It is available in yellow, red or black.

Renault saw the first model debut from its long-awaited return to producing cars in China. The Kadjar is the first vehicle to roll off the production line from the new joint venture with Dongfeng, with sales set to begin early next year.

One of the main trends from this year's show was the number of new-energy vehicles. This might in part be due to their exemption from the licence

plate restrictions in Guangzhou. Days before the show, Geely made a major announcement of its Blue Geely Initiative, which aims for new-energy vehicles to make up 90 per cent of its sales by 2020. Launched at the show, the Emgrand EV, based on the popular EC series, is the first car under that initiative, boasting an electric range of up to 330km. Next year will see the launch of a hybrid and plug-in hybrid drivetrain, based on a new 1.5T petrol engine and seven-speed dual-clutch transmission.

GAC's Trumpchi showed off two striking concepts. The EV Coupe showcases the group's electric technology in a car not too far removed from a production-possible model. The i-Lounge Concept, on the other hand, previews the GM5 MPV set for launch next year. Also at the show was the GS4 EV, an electric SUV with a supposed maximum range of 240km.

Also on the stand was the Leahead i1 EV. Leahead is a China-only Toyota brand created in response to government demands for more

technology to be passed over to joint venture partners – however, the car, based on the old Yaris and boasting a very limited range, seems to be anything but cutting-edge.

At the 2013 show, Toyota announced it was going to localise production of its hybrid systems for use in its joint ventures with GAC and FAW. The HEV versions of the Levin and Corolla – basically the same car, but from the different joint-venture partners – launched at the show and utilise the same system used in the Prius.

Roewe provided a touch of glamour to the show with the striking Vision R, featuring a sumptuous, futuristic interior of wood and leather and designed with swooping lines. It may well set the stage for a larger saloon to replace the Roewe 750 or 950.

No mention was made of a powertrain, but in any production version a plug-in hybrid system such as the one launched at the show in the E950 would be likely. Based on a 1.4T petrol engine, fuel consumption is claimed to be only 1.7l/100km.

# Smart technology allows Ranger to thrive in rough

Raymond Cheng

Ford has launched the latest Ranger, a pickup truck equipped with smart technology while capable of handling tough, off-road conditions.

Other strong players in the off-road segment include Jeep's Wrangler and Land Rover Discovery.

The latest Ranger, a model unveiled in 1983, is up to 13 per cent more fuel-efficient than its predecessor, and Ford claims it is "the most powerful pickup truck in Hong Kong".

"We know Hong Kong pickup truck owners love to explore the great outdoors. Their lifestyles demand both the ruggedness of a truck and the comfort of a passenger vehicle, and we're confident the new Ranger offers them this versatility," says David Loflin, sales director, Asia-Pacific emerging markets, Ford Motor Company.

The Ranger can wade through water 80cm deep, and with 23cm of ground clearance. It is designed and engineered to handle the most extreme terrain with ease. Thanks to a 28-degree approach angle and 25-degree departure angle, drivers can feel confident when taking on steep obstacles.

Smart technology includes Hill Launch Assist, which can hold the truck in place for up to three seconds when the driver removes their foot from the brake. The truck is equipped



An electric power-assisted steering system enhances driving.

with new technology. The in-car connectivity system lets drivers make phone calls and control their in-car entertainment system hands-free, using voice commands.

Ford says driving is enhanced by an electric power-assisted steering system – steering is light and manageable for low-speed manoeuvring, such as parking, and precise at higher speeds, with assistance varying as necessary based on speed, steering wheel angle, cornering forces and acceleration or deceleration.


"The new Ranger combines the unmatched capability and efficiency that drivers expect from a truck, with a high level of comfort and refinement unseen in this segment," Loflin says.

An electronically controlled transfer case allows drivers in 4x4 models to shift on the fly from 4x2 to 4x4 with a knob on the centre console. For low-speed torque or additional downhill braking, drivers can engage low-range 4x4 gearing, while an electronic locking rear differential helps to improve traction in difficult conditions. There is a towing capability of up to 3,500kg and exceptional payload capacity.

Other features include a rear-view camera, which gives a clear view behind the vehicle, especially handy when parking and hitching up a trailer. A light installed in the cargo tray gives all the illumination needed to complete a job, regardless of the time of day or night.



The new Ford Ranger is designed and engineered to handle the most extreme terrain with ease.



## DESIGNED TO ENTICE

In celebration of Aston Martin's long-standing association with James Bond, and to mark the release of the new film Spectre, 150 DB9 GTs have been placed on special reserve for the creation of individual DB9 GT Bond Edition models. Each Limited Edition comes equipped with an exclusive specification, featuring unique 007 badging and bespoke Bond-themed accessories.

To experience the DB9 GT Bond Edition for yourself, please contact us on the details below.

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