

## MOTORING

Edited by William Wadsworth  
william.wadsworth@scmp.com

# Straight expectations

The Hyundai Elantra Yuedong is a competent commuter, but it won't set your heart racing, writes **Mark Andrews**

Half a taxi in Beijing and you have a one in three chance it will be a Hyundai Elantra. Last year sales hit the half-million mark 40 months after the car's introduction to the Chinese market. Since April, the fourth generation has been on sale as the Elantra Yuedong. In true China "old cars never die" style, the third generation will continue to be built for fleet users such as taxi companies and the police, and the new car is aimed at young managers.

The fourth generation is quite a departure from the old model, which, although solid, was - let's face it - boring. Beijing Hyundai has taken the car sold in the rest of the world and modified it for the Chinese market.

In a world of cars that all look the same, the overall look of the Elantra is different. Replacing the boxy third

generation, the new model sports an undulating curve flowing down the body to a squat rear end. The most obvious external difference between China's Yuedong model and the one available elsewhere is the front grille, which has more chrome flash and presents a more aggressive visage. It's carried through to the bumper, housing redesigned fog lights. Small changes have also been made to the front and rear light clusters and the number plate mount.

Externally, the build quality is good, with panels fitting nicely together, and the interior is also quite satisfactory. Materials are of a reasonable quality and the overall look is pleasing to the eye. A two-tone dash consists of a dark grey upper layer giving way to a light grey lower down, complementing the grey leather seats. The CD/radio controls on the steering wheel are framed in chrome, as are the air conditioning controls. Fake wood

trim surrounds the chrome door handles - another nod to local tastes. An effort has also been made with details such as a cup holder in the central console and a rear armrest.

The range-topping GLS version boasts electric windows, mirrors, a sunroof and air conditioning. Connections are provided for MP3 players and Bluetooth mobile phones.

But the car's safety features are quite a let-down. The Australian version, which received just three stars in ANCAP tests, boasts six airbags - but the Yuedong has only two. And the middle passenger in the rear seat only has a lap restraint.

Rear legroom is generous, but tall adults may have a problem with the low ceiling. The boot volume is a respectable 475 litres, which should be big enough for most families.

After missing the turning onto the Badaling Expressway and then exiting too early, the lack of a navigation system starts to grate, even though the car proves equally at home on the motorway as in central Beijing. It also manages to swallow the bumps on the road around the Shisanling Reservoir.

Steering is electronically assisted, feels very light, and there's generally no feedback. But the car goes where you point it and its roadholding is quite good. The 1.8-litre engine paired with the four-speed automatic gearbox seems to have sufficient power without straining the engine, and gear changes are smooth. The car is also available



## AT A GLANCE: Hyundai Elantra Yuedong

**What drives it?** There's a choice of a 1.6-litre or a 130-horsepower 1.8-litre petrol engine with either a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic gearbox.

**How fast is it?** No sprint figures are quoted but the 1.8 tops out at 185km/h.

**How safe is it?** Safety is questionable as there are only two airbags in the version offered to the mainland.

with a 1.6-litre engine and a five-speed manual transmission in both versions. The gearbox choices reveal the car's budget roots, as class leaders such as the Volkswagen Golf come with six-speed manuals and DSG automatics.

All the controls are handy and the driving position is comfortable, with buttons for the entertainment system mounted on the steering wheel. When passing under bridges, the blue glow from instrument backlighting is obvious and the dials are easy to read. Below the entertainment system on the central console is a display showing climate control information; it's a hot autumn day, but the air-conditioning system does a good job of cooling the car.

Although general visibility is good, reversing isn't so easy, thanks

to the car's high back end, but rear radar sensors help.

The Elantra's competence and composure partially offset what it lacks in excitement, and it seems Hyundai has made its cosmetic changes to try to appeal to young execs. Yet whether that will help sell a saloon that elsewhere is regarded as a car for older folk who don't care much for driving remains to be seen.

Gone are the days where China was treated by European carmakers as a dumping ground for old designs. It seems increasing numbers of manufacturers are modifying cars specially for the market, and some - such as Volkswagen with its Lavidia - are even making China-only models. However, the Elantra Yuedong suggests Chinese drivers shouldn't expect too much.

## Wirewheels

### Chinese marques quiet in Paris

One very noticeable feature of the Paris Motor Show this month was the almost complete absence of Chinese marques.

Whereas the 2006 Paris show featured major displays from several mainland manufacturers - notably sports utility vehicle manufacturers Great Wall and Landwind - this year's event, which closes tomorrow, included just two low-key displays from Brilliance and China Automobile France.

It seems the combination of tough European conditions, a focus on serving the fast-growing mainland market and difficulties in adequately meeting European emissions and crash-test standards have dissuaded the Chinese from making a major play for Europe at the moment.

Great Wall drew praise for some of its designs and Brilliance is already selling cars on the continent, rolling out a range of models in a number of markets. But progress has been slow and a poor Euro NCAP score has done the marque's image no good.

A much-publicised independent crash test seems to have sent Landwind back to the drawing board. The company now plans to wait until it has more suitable models before making a pitch in Europe.

The other mainland exhibitor is the French division of China Automobile Deutschland, the German outfit that caused a major hoo-ha at last year's Frankfurt Show, when it upset a number of manufacturers by showing cars that critics said bore more than a passing resemblance to established models such as the BMW X5 and Toyota RAV4.

One of those cars - the Shuanghuan CEO - was on show, and is about to go on sale with a €25,990 (HK\$273,882) price tag. But the RAV4-lookalike Jonway UFO wasn't on show - it's "being restyled", which will cause some delays to its launch, the company says.

Instead, China Automobile France showed two new original models - the Kiff, a leisure-oriented lightweight 4x4 made by Shanghai Xingyue Power Machinery and powered by an 812cc three-cylinder Chery petrol engine. It's on sale now, priced at about €10,240.

The other was the prototype Chika city car (top right). It looks sweet, but website Popsi.com put it in its place.

"This droplet of a car won't win any awards for swiftness", the site says. "It's a limited-use electric [model] that tops out at 31mph [50km/h]. And with a five-horsepower motor and a range of 93 miles [150km], it's best kept safely inside the walls of a planned community."

Perhaps it's really an escapee from Discovery Bay. *Newspress and Pixie Zheng*

### Toyota unveils IQ tiddler

Toyota says it's out to prove a tiny car can be top-notch with its new IQ "ultra-compact" that's less than 3 metres long but which offers quality safety features, mileage and handling.

And it's asking a bit more for the IQ (above), which seats three adults and one child or luggage in the fourth seat. From November 20 the IQ will sell from 1.4 million yen (HK\$107,121) - more than Toyota's Vitz, which goes for about 1 million yen. Toyota wants to sell 2,500 IQs a month in Japan and introduce the tiddler to Europe early next year.

The 1-litre IQ is trying to be in a class of its own, like the Mini Cooper, and it's not a two-seater like Daimler AG's Mercedes-Benz Smart, Toyota says, adding that it hopes to woo fashionable drivers who are willing to pay more for a small car, not the typical frugal compact owner.

The IQ comes with nine airbags in the standard model, including a curtain shield airbag that deploys from the roof lining about the rear window to protect back-seat passengers' heads in a rear-end collision.

It goes 23km on a litre of fuel under Japanese standards, the best mileage for a Toyota that's not a gas-electric hybrid, Toyota says.

The car's turning radius is just 3.9 metres, and the marque says it has made design innovations for a more efficient placement of the engine, fuel tank and other parts, and made seat backs thinner while not compromising on comfort for more legroom.

The IQ's "i" stands for "individuality," "innovation" and "intelligence," and "q" for "quality," and the "q" hints at "cubic" and "cue," Toyota says. *Associated Press*

tattoos for cars and bikes on the internet. The designs (above) might not win many points at the Classic Car Club concurs on October 26, but they could give your Wagon R a few extra waahs at weekends.

The company says it expects "to see a great demand for our dragon tattoos from the boys and the girls going wild for some stunning flowers graphics".

"The original car and bike art tattoos come in A3 and A4 kits," the company says. "They're simple to apply and remove, cause no damage to paintwork, are weatherproof [and cost] from €14.99 [HK\$202]. Inquiries: cruzeink.com"

### Chater Road Show reminder

Finally, the Classic Car Club reminds us that it will hold its Chater Road Show between 10am and 4pm on October 26. If you are displaying your car at this splendid event, tell us about it on cars@scmp.com.



### Investors pile into precious metal

London-based car auctioneer Coys reports unprecedented sales, with millions of pounds' worth of cars being sold in the days following the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

"We are reporting very strong sales - US\$8.5 million since mid September," says the company's managing director, Chris Routledge. "It would appear that people would rather buy an historic car and put it in the garage than brave the current highs and lows of the stock market."

Recent sales have included a 1996 Ferrari F50 - the only right-hand drive example produced, custom-made by the marque for the Sultan of Brunei - for €350,000 (HK\$4.7 million), the auctioneer says. A private collector also offloaded an excellent example of a 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing for €385,000, and "the last remaining original, unrestored example of a 1955 Aston Martin DB35 [below] anywhere in

the world sold for over £2 million". A rare right-hand-drive Lancia Aurelia B24 Spyder (above) with one owner for the past 35 years changed hands for £45,000. *Newspress*



Aldridge reprises arty Mini  
A Mini One with a unique exterior designed by British artist and graphic designer Alan Aldridge is now on show at the Design Museum in London until January 25. "The Mini Aldridge Special [below] is an exhibit in a retrospective display of Alan's work, entitled The Man with Kaleidoscope Eyes, Mini says.

Dubbed "The Graphic Entertainer", Aldridge illustrated lyrics books for the Beatles, album covers for The Rolling Stones, The Who and Elton John, and the book *The Butterfly Ball*.

In his exhibit, Aldridge recreates a cover of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, which in 1965 featured a classic Mini painted in his own, imitable style. The updated interpretation of this image, using a new Mini One as the canvas for his design, featured on the front cover of last Sunday's edition of the

magazine. "Mini will be celebrating its 50th birthday in 2009, so this is the perfect way to begin celebrating 50 years of the car in Britain," the marque says. *Newspress*

BMW Motorrad updates K series  
BMW Motorrad has updated three K-series models that share the same chassis and upgraded drivetrain, but which appeal to different markets, with design makeovers, a new exhaust and a sportier sound. The bikes are: the K 1300 S - the fastest motorcycle BMW Motorrad has ever produced; the high-performance K 1300 R "naked" bike that the marque says is "the most technically advanced machine in its class"; and the K 1300 GT (below), which the marque describes as "quite simply the best sports tourer BMW Motorrad has ever made".

The heart of these three models is the second-generation of BMW Motorrad's four-cylinder power unit, which has been increased from 1,157cc to 1,293cc and which promises more power and 10Nm more torque, at 140Nm. The block gets new pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft and maximum power output is achieved at 9,250rpm, which is 1,000rpm lower than the previous model. *Newspress*

BMW Motorrad updates K series  
BMW Motorrad has updated three K-series models that share the same chassis and upgraded drivetrain, but which appeal to different markets, with design makeovers, a new exhaust and a sportier sound. The bikes are: the K 1300 S - the fastest motorcycle BMW Motorrad has ever produced; the high-performance K 1300 R "naked" bike that the marque says is "the most technically advanced machine in its class"; and the K 1300 GT (below), which the marque describes as "quite simply the best sports tourer BMW Motorrad has ever made".

The heart of these three models is the second-generation of BMW Motorrad's four-cylinder power unit, which has been increased from 1,157cc to 1,293cc and which promises more power and 10Nm more torque, at 140Nm. The block gets new pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft and maximum power output is achieved at 9,250rpm, which is 1,000rpm lower than the previous model. *Newspress*

BMW Motorrad updates K series  
BMW Motorrad has updated three K-series models that share the same chassis and upgraded drivetrain, but which appeal to different markets, with design makeovers, a new exhaust and a sportier sound. The bikes are: the K 1300 S - the fastest motorcycle BMW Motorrad has ever produced; the high-performance K 1300 R "naked" bike that the marque says is "the most technically advanced machine in its class"; and the K 1300 GT (below), which the marque describes as "quite simply the best sports tourer BMW Motorrad has ever made".

The heart of these three models is the second-generation of BMW Motorrad's four-cylinder power unit, which has been increased from 1,157cc to 1,293cc and which promises more power and 10Nm more torque, at 140Nm. The block gets new pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft and maximum power output is achieved at 9,250rpm, which is 1,000rpm lower than the previous model. *Newspress*

BMW Motorrad updates K series  
BMW Motorrad has updated three K-series models that share the same chassis and upgraded drivetrain, but which appeal to different markets, with design makeovers, a new exhaust and a sportier sound. The bikes are: the K 1300 S - the fastest motorcycle BMW Motorrad has ever produced; the high-performance K 1300 R "naked" bike that the marque says is "the most technically advanced machine in its class"; and the K 1300 GT (below), which the marque describes as "quite simply the best sports tourer BMW Motorrad has ever made".

The heart of these three models is the second-generation of BMW Motorrad's four-cylinder power unit, which has been increased from 1,157cc to 1,293cc and which promises more power and 10Nm more torque, at 140Nm. The block gets new pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft and maximum power output is achieved at 9,250rpm, which is 1,000rpm lower than the previous model. *Newspress*

BMW Motorrad updates K series  
BMW Motorrad has updated three K-series models that share the same chassis and upgraded drivetrain, but which appeal to different markets, with design makeovers, a new exhaust and a sportier sound. The bikes are: the K 1300 S - the fastest motorcycle BMW Motorrad has ever produced; the high-performance K 1300 R "naked" bike that the marque says is "the most technically advanced machine in its class"; and the K 1300 GT (below), which the marque describes as "quite simply the best sports tourer BMW Motorrad has ever made".

The heart of these three models is the second-generation of BMW Motorrad's four-cylinder power unit, which has been increased from 1,157cc to 1,293cc and which promises more power and 10Nm more torque, at 140Nm. The block gets new pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft and maximum power output is achieved at 9,250rpm, which is 1,000rpm lower than the previous model. *Newspress*



Hyundai has added some shine to the Elantra's interior for the China market

## Footdown

Edited by William Wadsworth  
cars@scmp.com

### VW sale in Tsuen Wan

Volkswagen Hong Kong's service centre at 204-210 Texaco Road, Tsuen Wan (tel: 3698 9733) tomorrow offers up to 20 per cent off 22 display and company cars, "while stocks last", says spokeswoman Vicki Ho.

Most of the Volkswagen range is represented, but our pick of the test-drive cars would be the Golf GT 1.4, reduced from HK\$249,000 to HK\$224,100 or a two-litre Beetle Cabriolet (above), reduced from HK\$250,000 to HK\$225,000.

The dealer also offers big discounts on larger-engined cars, with a "manager's" million-dollar 4.2-litre Phaeton offered at HK\$800,000 alongside three display 3.6-litre Touaregs at HK\$487,350, HK\$25,650 off list price. A manager's Touareg is also going for HK\$461,000.

Lovely - but you might want to push the dealer harder on price. We reckon more local dealers could slash prices on larger cars as Hong Kong families realise the folly of driving big 3.6-litre gas-guzzlers in a compact town on the brink of recession. Engines over two litres can feel wasted in our traffic.



### My 2CV hit 90mph, says reader

Sha Tin reader Hugo Latham responded to our toast last week to the 60th anniversary to the Citroen 2CV. "My mother bought [a V reg, below right] for my older brother and me when we were learning to drive," says Latham, an English teacher who has been in Hong Kong for 13 years. "I passed my test on the first attempt in it. My mother thought it was an excellent choice as she said, 'we couldn't kill ourselves in it!'"

"Little did she know. We found that driving down the M40 near High Wycombe there was a long, steep hill. If we built up enough speed before this incline we could go off the speed clock! The clock read 80mph [128k/h] but we were sure we hit 90mph!" Latham says he will always remember the faces of the passengers in the cars his 2CV overtook. "We even had to flash our lights to ask the car in front to get out of the way!" he says.

The Latham 2CV also had a habit of brake failure, he says, recalling a scary descent in the mountains of North Wales. Latham's worst 2CV moment was "when a bunch of us went to Rome in two 2CVs", he says. "My friend's caught fire as we were descending a mountain in northern Italy. My brother in front didn't notice we were on fire and merrily drove on! We put out the fire and decided it would be best to coast down the hill to the village below. We rolled off and started down the hill with my friend steering and me in the front.

"The first and second bends were fine but the third seemed to come very quickly. I looked at my friend who was driving and noticed he looked very pale.

"We all went into emergency mode. This included grabbing the dashboard and screaming! The 2CV took each corner like a F1 sports car - unfortunately the passengers were not as cool as an F1 driver! The road levelled out into a village and we were slowing down when we noticed an old man stepping onto the road ahead.

"We watched in horror as he shuffled across the road while we bore down on him, we tried to sound the horn but the electrics had

been damaged in the fire! It was just a stroke of luck that the man saw us and threw himself to safety as our silent 2CV shot past."

The Latham CV coasted to a stop and the shaken crew learned during local repairs that the elderly predecessor was British.

"He had fought in the war and stayed behind in Italy," Latham says. "We drank red wine to settle our nerves and laughed about the whole thing. We thought about the irony of it... this veteran fought for England and liberated France but was almost killed by a bunch of British lads in a French car! Such is life."

If you have any 2CV memories or if you'd like to relive your most frightening motoring moment, e-mail cars@scmp.com.

### Tattoo your ride

We hear British brand Cruzeink sells



tattoos for cars and bikes on the internet. The designs (above) might not win many points at the Classic Car Club concurs on October 26, but they could give your Wagon R a few extra waahs at weekends.

The company says it expects "to see a great demand for our dragon tattoos from the boys and the girls going wild for some stunning flowers graphics".

"The original car and bike art tattoos come in A3 and A4 kits," the company says. "They're simple to apply and remove, cause no damage to paintwork, are weatherproof [and cost] from €14.99 [HK\$202]. Inquiries: cruzeink.com"

### Chater Road Show reminder

Finally, the Classic Car Club reminds us that it will hold its Chater Road Show between 10am and 4pm on October 26. If you are displaying your car at this splendid event, tell us about it on cars@scmp.com.

