David Miles’ Motoring News Round-up No. 9

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MOTORING MILESTONE NEWS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED – Edition 9…

… by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Sales Departments Open!

Although the lockdown measures have eased with some people already back at work, or they should be working from home, some schools in England open for some age groups, most car dealerships ready for business with some car manufacturing plants already producing vehicles even if in limited amounts and sporting events happening again under restrictive measures, we are slowly easing back into working life of sorts.

So hopefully it won't be too long before we get back to reviewing new and updated cars and physically attending new model launches. But holding media events and test car operations

under social distancing measures and logistics companies sanitising cars before we get them, it is not going to be easy.

So until test cars come rolling in my direction, hopefully next week with the new Suzuki S-Cross Hybrid 48v system, I'm still sifting through automotive news items you might have missed.

David says, "Suzuki's new S-Cross Hybrid 48v back on my road test schedule potentially in a week's time."

Automotive industry figures we don’t want to read

Figures just released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that car production in the UK for April was the lowest monthly total since the Second World War Production fell by 99.7% with just 197 units made as the coronavirus pandemic closed factories.

It was no better news for April’s UK engine production figures as well with a fall of 99.5% with just 830 engines manufactured.

It was even worse news for UK commercial vehicle production in April with just 15 vehicles produced – fall of 99.3%.

CAR MANUFACTURING

	Apr-19	Apr-20	% change	YTD-19	YTD-20	% change
Total	70,971	197	-99.7%	441,260	319,449	-27.6%
Home	13,656	45	-99.7%	92,590	64,622	-30.2%
Export	57,315	152	-99.7%	348,670	254,827	-26.9%
% export	80.8%	77.2%		79.0%	79.8%	

SMMT UK car April manufacuring figures.

ENGINE MANUFACTURING

	Apr-19	Apr-20	% change	YTD-19	YTD-20	% change
Total	178,022	830	-99.5%	900,921	599,793	-33.4%
Home	51,465	49	-99.9%	306,572	243,376	-20.6%
Export	126,557	781	-99.4%	594,349	356,417	-40.0%
% export	71.1%	94.1%		66.0%	59.4%	

SMMT engine manufacturing in UK, April figures.

CV MANUFACTURING

	Apr-19	Apr-20	% change	YTD-19	YTD-20	% change
Total	2,162	15	-99.3%	29,675	21,488	-27.6%
Home	1,637	15	-99.1%	12,523	9,226	-26.3%
Export	525	0	-100.0%	17,152	12,262	-28.5%
% export	24.3%	0.0%		57.8%	57.1%	

SMMT April CV vehicle production figures.

Stop press: I have just received the SMMT's UK May new car registration figures, they are better than April's but not good. A fall of 89% for the month with just over 20,000 vehicles delivered with the industry's 'click and collect' services proving popular for retail customers who were 63.7% of the buyers. The Tesla 3 was the best-selling new car in May followed by the Vauxhall Corsa and then the Ford Fiesta, which remains the best selling model range for the year to date.

In Europe April new car sales figures provided by JATO Dynamics show a 78% sales decrease, down from 1.34-million in April 2019 to 292,600 for April 2020. The best-selling car was the VW Golf, best selling hybrid the Toyota Corolla, best selling PHEV the VW Passat and the best selling pure electric model – the Tesla 3.

Top 10 Best-Selling cars Europe-27 April 2020

* Europe-23

	Overall Ranking		Hybrid*		Plug-in Hybrid*		Electric*	
1	Volkswagen Golf	7,810	Toyota Corolla	3,146	Volkswagen Passat	981	Tesla Model 3	2,278
2	Skoda Octavia	6,529	Toyota C-HR	2,178	Mitsubishi Outlander	920	Renault Zoe	2,112
3	Renault Clio	6,370	Toyota RAV4	1,728	Volvo V60	897	Volkswagen Golf	1,634
4	Ford Focus	4,971	Toyota Yaris	1,565	BMW X3	828	Audi E-Tron	1,289
5	Opel/Vauxhall Corsa	4,198	Ford Puma	1,170	Ford Kuga	753	Hyundai Kona	926
6	Peugeot 208	4,141	Volvo XC60	790	BMW X5	680	Nissan Leaf	906
7	Volkswagen Tiguan	4,111	Suzuki Ignis	528	Skoda Superb	580	Kia Niro	802
8	Toyota Corolla	4,006	Kia Niro	518	Kia Niro	482	BMW i3	765
9	Volkswagen Passat	3,968	Suzuki Swift	480	Mercedes C-Class	473	Volkswagen Up	678
10	Volkswagen T-Roc	3,840	BMW 3-Series	429	Audi A3	465	Mini Hatch	576

JATO

JATO's Europen car sales figures for April.

Nissan's Sunderland Plant under threat with a no Brexit deal

Not good news for Nissan's Sunderland Plant, the largest car manufacturing facility in the

UK. A warning this week that unless the UK gets a Brexit deal from the EU its future is under threat. As 70% of the cars manufactured at Sunderland are sold in the EU the company needs a deal to avoid tariffs of 10% under World Trade Organisation rules. That is the legal default position if a UK- EU deal is not agreed.

Come on in we want to see you

Car dealership showrooms in England officially opened this week but under strict social distancing measures and the industry must be hoping the potential pent-up demand to buy a new, or used, vehicle actually happens. With job uncertainties, increased family debt for those who have taken a mortgage holiday or deferred PCP payments for their existing car, it might take some while before buying with confidence returns.

Anti-viral social distancing measures in operation at car dealerships.

The majority of vehicle brands have re-opened for business with financial incentives to buy a new car such as Suzuki's Buy&Try scheme which my colleague reported on earlier this week. On 1 June Suzuki launched three new ranges of 48-volt Self Charging Hybrid models which reduce CO2 emissions and improve performance and fuel economy.

The three Hybrid model ranges are the Swift Sport supermini priced at £21,570, the Vitara mid-sized SUV range priced from £21,749 to £26,549 for the top spec Allgrip 4WD version and the S-Cross SUV/estate priced from £20,749 to £27,549 for the top spec Allgrip 4WD variant.

All models marry a 1.4-litre Boosterjet petrol engine with a new 48-volt hybrid electric Integrated Starter Generator and a lithium-ion battery pack. The system's generator also acts as a starter motor and assists the petrol engine during vehicle acceleration with higher levels of 235 Nm (173 lb.ft) torque from 2,000 rpm.

Suzuki's new Vitara Hybrid 48v available under the brand's new Buy&Try scheme.

For good measure these models, along with other in the Suzuki range, except the Jimny pocket-sized SUV, are available with 0% PCP rates of 48 months plus the Buy&Try scheme.

Mazda have introduced what they call ‘An Offer For Our Time’ with 0% PCP finance across their full six car range with no minimum deposit required, low monthly payments for up to 48 months and a £500 deposit contribution for their Mazda2. Their Mazda3 is available with 0% PCP, no minimum deposit and a 48 month repayment period. Similar offers are available for other models.

Mazda2 available through their ‘an offer for our time’ scheme.

Kia’s June sales finance offerings include 0% finance across their entire hybrid range as well as petrol and diesel powered variants of the Sportage, XCeed, Ceed Sportswagon and Picanto. There is a decrease in finance APR rates across all models and grades on 36 month

PCP offers. Customers with a current Kia model can get a £500 discount of XCeed purchases, a similar amount is available for customers trading in a Venga, Carens or Soul models towards any brand-new Kia and they are also offering a £2,500 Scrappage Scheme to trade in old models of any make for some selected Kia variants.

Another example of a good time to buy comes from Volkswagen. To ease the financial burden on customers during these challenging times, VW has introduced a new finance offer where the brand will cover the first three months' worth of payments on new car purchases.

The offer is available across the whole range when a vehicle is purchased on Solutions Personal Contract Plan.

Dacia and Renault also have drive now pay later type PCP finance deals on certain new, if not all, models with nothing to pay for the first three months. Renault offers a three year, 0% PCP finance plan and some models are available with no deposit. Dacia offer their three month payment holiday with a 6.9% PCP rate and a £750 deposit contribution.

Renault Captur, one of many models from many brands offering pay later PCP deals.

It’s a buyer’s market – shop around. These are just a few of the many financial offers available so hopefully there will be enough buyers around to take them up.

BMW reveals new 4 Series Coupé

BMW’s new 4 Series Coupé revealed this week but arrives in October.

The new BMW 4 Series, two door, four seater Coupé has a distinctive sharp design to set it further apart from the new 3 Series range although its use many of its components. However what have they done to the iconic BMW twin kidney grille design? The new design is huge and now looks like buttocks rather than kidneys.

I say this from the pictures I’ve received from BMW rather than seeing the car in the metal. Apart from the front end it looks great and it’s slightly larger than the outgoing 4 Series

Coupé models.

However we have time to get used to it as it doesn’t arrive until October with current prices range from £39,870 to £53,875. But two other models, the 430d xDrive M Sport and M440d xDive variants are yet to be priced as they will not arrive until March next year.

The current engine line up is the 420i 184 hp, 430i 258 hp, M440i xDrive 374 hp petrol units and 420d 190 hp and 420d 190 hp xDrive diesels. Mild hybrid technology is used for all diesel engines and the straight-six petrol unit of the flagship M440i xDrive.

New VW Golf entry level model arrives

The new Volkswagen Golf line-up has been expanded further with the addition of a Life spec entry level model with a 1.0 litre three-cylinder 110 hp turbo petrol engine with a six speed manual gearbox. A mild hybrid version with a dual clutch auto gearbox will arrive at a later date.

VW’s new Golf Life entry level model launched.

The eighth-generation Golf opened for orders in February 2020 with two 1.5 litre petrol engines and two 2.0 litre diesel units on offer, while a month later the advanced 1.5 eTSI mild-hybrid was made available. With the arrival of this frugal new powertrain option, the entry-price of the Golf is now £23,300 on-the-road.

With the compact, three-cylinder 1.0 litre turbocharged engine installed, the Golf Life is able to sprint to 62 mph from standstill in 10.2 seconds before going on to a top speed of 126 mph. The new engine results in the Golf Life being capable of returning between

49.6-53.3 mpg on the combined WLTP cycle while emitting between 121-129 g/km of CO2.

The Golf Life is equipped as standard with 16-inch ‘Norfolk’ alloy wheels and automatic LED headlights, rain-sensing wipers, front and rear parking sensors, electrically heated and adjustable door mirrors with memory feature, and keyless start. It also features VW’s Innovision Cockpit, which incorporates Digital Cockpit Pro with 10-inch screen into the car’s instrument binnacle, as well as a large and clear 10-inch Discover Navigation touch-screen infotainment system. Finally, standard safety features include Car2X sat-nav, Adaptive Cruise Control, a Driver Alert System, Dynamic Road Sign Display, Lane Assist and also Front Assist, with extended pedestrian protection measures.

Ford adds new models to their Puma range

Ford adds a high spec Vignale version to their Puma SUV range.

Ford's recently launched Puma SUV styled compact crossover range gains a Vignale flagship version priced from £25,240. The added premium spec includes 18-inch alloys, a satin aluminium upper grille and surround, ebony lower grille, and body-coloured lower rear bumper. Standard specification also includes signature LED headlights, Windsor leather seats, wrapped instrument cluster, heated front seats, heated steering wheel and Ford KeyFree system.

Ford Puma Vignale plush interior.

In addition the Puma line-up additions include a seven speed auto transmission option for their 125 hp 1.0 litre EcoBoost petrol engine. Prices for these auto models start from

£22,945.

The Puma range also has 48 volt mild hybrid technology variants now offered with two power outputs in combination with six speed manual gearboxes. The 1.0 litre EcoBoost petrol engine is available with the 48 volt system with 125 or 155 hp power outputs. They are priced from £20,990 and £21,740 respectively depending on the choice of Titanium or ST-Line spec levels. A new Ford Performance Puma ST model will join the range later this year.

Refreshed Citroën C3 models ready to order

Citroën’s refreshed C3 model range with 97 different exterior customisable options.

Citroën’s revised C3 supermini hatchback range is the latest evolution of the French brand’s worldwide best-seller. The third generation Citroën C3 has already secured more than 780,000 sales globally since its launch in 2016. The revised C3 features the brand’s latest front-end styling, updated interiors and efficient RDE2-compliant petrol and diesel engines. Order books for UK customers opened this week with deliveries expected in August.

The UK prices start from £16,280 and are now the brand’s most customisable hatchback,

with up to 97 different exterior combinations. There is the choice of Feel, Fair and Flair Plus spec levels with the availability of PureTech 83 hp manual, 110 hp manual and auto petrol units plus a BlueHDi 100 turbodiesel manual unit. Prices top out at £21,270 for the Flair Plus PureTech 110 hp auto version.

Other news briefs

Motorpoint the UK's largest independent car retailer has just completed its 1,000th home delivery since lockdown started. Their free home delivery service comes with a 14-day money back guarantee.

Motorpoint has completed their 1,000th home delivery to customers since the lockdown started.

The landmark deal was done for a lady from Maidenhead who part exchanged her Fiat 500 she had previously bought from Motorpoint and this time upsized to a 68 plate MINI Cooper S. Established in 1998 Motorpoint sells nearly new cars up to 3-years old and with less than 25,000 recorded miles. They employ over 800 people at 14 UK locations.

In a survey, Anderson-EV, an electric home charging point manufacturer and installer, found the UK has a national average of 55 cars per public charging point. London has 78% of the country's charging points but southwest electric car owners have to compete with 1,447 other owners for each point. Their message I guess is have a home charging point if at all possible which for those who street park isn't possible. We need a proper integrated national fast charging network to boost sales of all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Anderson-EV electric car charging point survey.

F1 confirms Silverstone Circuit dates plus other motorcycle racing updates

F1 returns with the first races in Austria and Silverstone's races confirmed subject to quarantine situations at the time and with no spectators.

Despite the Government's chaotic mixed messages quarantine plans it appears that at last they have approved the F1 British Grand Prix will go ahead. The oldest World Championship race will go ahead with two races – the first British Grand Prix on 2 August and the second, the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix a week later on the 9 August. No spectators will be allowed.

The F1 travelling party of around 2,000 people will start the season off in Austria on the first two weekends of July before decamping to Hungary for the next race on 19 July. Then there is a weekend off before the double-header Silverstone races. Next will be Barcelona

on 16 August, Belgium on 30 August and Italy on 6 September. The F1 races will be supported by F2 and F3 racing at the first eight meetings of the revised season. These dates were confirmed this week but will be subject to ongoing pandemic situations in each country.

On two wheels the delayed MotoGP 2020 world motorcycle championship is scheduled to now start in Spain 19 July but the UK round at Silverstone 28-30 August is cancelled due to logistical issues following the proposed revised travel programme. The WSB world superbike revised championships re-start is proposed for 31 July and 2 August at Jerez in Spain and there is no start date yet for BSB British superbike championship with the Silverstone round in April having been cancelled but a revised programme is due shortly.