British Motor Show Report – hot off the press

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Chris Adamson reports from the show… which is open NOW (Friday 19th August) and continues until Sunday 21st August 2022.

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If you expect an event entitled the British Motor Show to feature all the latest new cars from the big name brands on expansive spotlight crowded stands with scantily clad women draped over bonnets and celebrities wandering around with Champagne in their hands, then the revived British Motor Show is probably not for you.

Yes, there are some 27 showroom marque names in the halls at the Farnborough Exhibition Centre, but they are presented by dealership groups and not the manufacturers themselves for an event that is clearly aimed at offering something with a motoring theme for all age groups and budgets rather than just the drivers in the family.

Running over four days at the Hampshire venue, the second year of the interactive show, sponsored by used car specialist Cinch, is designed to meet both the aspirations and the practicalities of a modern British family (50 million of them being drivers) with a mix of commercial exhibitors (trying to sell you a diverse variety of new and used vehicles as well as a shopping trolley full of automotive accessories) and entertainment (high speed passenger rides, motorsport demonstrations, simulators and even crazy golf).

Aspirations are catered for with an extensive display of big ticket money exotica in the Supercar Paddock sponsored by Premier GT who have plenty of their own cars on show to tempt those with over £150,000 to spend on a high performance machine.

With premium badges such as Ferrari, Lamborghini, McLaren, Porsche and Aston Martin on display, a quick rough calculation of the cars to be seen easily topped the £100 million mark – that doesn’t even normally happen at a traditional motor show.



Supercar paddock...



Premier GT supercar selection.

Many of these were being put through their paces in the main area where their performance and price tags were being assessed by commentators Mike Brewer, he of Wheels Dealers TV fame, and acknowledged petrol head Iwan Thomas the silver medal winning Olympic athlete.

The arena also hosts stunt driving by Paul Swift , a celebrity CARmonwealth Games challenge and daily drop-ins from the British Army Lightning Bolts parachute team.

For the more affordable minded motorist (bearing in mind the average family car now costs £40,000) the main hall provided access to most of the current high-street showroom crop of the latest models, among them three getting their UK debut: the Subaru Solterra, an all-

electric 288 mile range all-wheel drive SUV; the SsangYong Musso, a heavily facelifted twin cab pick-up, and the Mazda CX-60 SUV – the Japanese company's first plug-in hybrid model.



Subaru Solterra.



SsangYong Musso.



Mazda CX-60.

Tucked away among the big name brands were several interesting small UK based enterprises including the Young Driver Motor Club that unveiled the Firefly Sport a 2.1 metre car that can accommodate children aged from four to ten, is capable of speeds up to 25 mph and has a 200 metre range.

Designed to help children take their first steps into the world of motoring, it uses all UK sourced components including 12 volt batteries from a Broomsgrove supplier and two 24-volt electric motors manufactured in Bournemouth.

An equally interesting full-sized new comer is the Cambridgeshire made Contera MD1, a

dihedral (butterfly) doored, three-seater (the driver sits in the middle at the front) GT road car based on the principals of a Group C racing car powered by a 300 bhp 2.5 litre twin-turbocbharged Toyota/TYamaha engine with the option of a 700 bhp upgrade.



Contera MD1.

The makers don’t quote a top speed but promise you can have supercar looks for just £70,000.

From even just a casual survey of the latest car maker offerings it is clear that electric is the way that almost everyone envisages motoring going in the future.

This year rather than being isolated in a small hall some distance from the main show as they were 12 months ago, the EVs are given their own home in a second exhibition hall, a short flight of stairs away sponsored by elmo.



elmo EV hall.

This is a new venture that allows motorists to drive an electric car by subscription as an alternative to leasing that provides a complete flexible period, no-deposit package including: maintenance, insurance, road tax, breakdown recovery and tyre replacement.

Within the new hall there is everything from new EV models to classic EV conversions and it is also the location for viewing the British designed and built modular electric van – the

INDe.EV – an ungainly slab sided medium sized commercial that maximised aerodynamics to provide optimum carrying capacity and range.



Electric classics.



InDe.EV van.

Designed in conjunction with the University of Brighton and built in East Sussex, the INDe.EV offers a one tonne payload and a 4.5 metre square cargo bay. It has a 60 kWh battery to drive its electric motor and claims a 230 mile range, a top speed of 70 mph and a charging time of just 15 minutes.

Full production is due to start by April 2023 with a target of 11,000 vehicles a year.

While electric powered vehicles dominate, there are other alternatives being promoted at the show including hydrogen and synthetic fuels/biofuels.

The AA, who already have a number of electric vehicles on their patrol fleet, used the show to unveil their first hydrogen fuel cell powered patrol car – the Hyundai Nexo – that has been designed to carry the usual kit for roadside breakdowns.

Targeted at call-outs in ultra-low emission zones, the Nexo can re-fuel in five minutes and has a range of over 400 miles.



AA Hydrogen powered patrol vehicle.

AA President Edmund King explained that they are committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2035 so are exploring all avenues and this also includes hydrogen and synthetic fuels/biofuels. The problem with EVs is that no one has yet come up with a vehicle that is

capable of towing over two tons – a regular requirement for the breakdown and recovery service.

So they are also keen to test out synthetic fuels/biofuels that will work with existing combustion engines and provide the pulling power that electric has yet to achieve.

Synthetic fuels/biofuels were making a loud and smoky presence outside on the Caterham drifting arena where the two-seat sportscars giving adrenalin passenger rides are powered by non-fossil fuel derived propellant supplied by Coryton.



Caterham drift rides powered by synthetic fuels/biofuels.

This is a UK company that has spent the last 12 years developing sustainable carbon based fuels made from renewable materials, primarily agricultural waste such as straw which has captured carbon from the atmosphere (as CO2) during its growing cycle.

It was appropriate that the opening day of the show coincided with the announcement of this year's GCSE results, which will determine the future education of a whole generation, as the show includes a careers section.

Welcoming potential new recruits, Steve Nash, CEO of the Institute of the Motor Industry, explained that that with the grown of EVs the vehicle servicing industry needs to train and qualify 20,000 technicians to work on these vehicles by 2030 and currently there are 23,000 vacancies across the whole of the UK automotive sector (out of a total of more than a million workers in the UK motor industry).

"Billions of pounds in grants to train these young people are being lost because there are not enough apprentices coming into the industry," he commented.

Young drivers

Those eligible to take up these opportunities would also be interested in the show's Young Driver section where they can get behind the wheel of a road car on a designated course.



Young Driver arena.

And to start them offer as drivers even earlier, a neighbouring course provides electric mini land rovers for aspiring pre-teen drivers to try their hand at.



Even younger driver arena…

For those already holding a licence with an interest in making motoring a little more interesting than just getting from A to B, the destination was the Petrolheadonism hall and associated displays that include outrageous custom and modified cars and Shred Shed drifting displays as well a land-speed record breaking Sunbeam on the National Motor Museum stand.



Petrolhedonism hall.



Drift car line-up.

More mature motorists could be seen heading towards the outdoor classic car displays provided by both national and local car clubs that range from British stalwarts such as the Mini and Ford Escort to French fancies and American muscle cars.



Classic Minis.



Classic American Ford GTs.

Many visitors were to be found taking the weight off their feet in the National Geographic Live Stage where Car SOS presenters Fuzz Townshend and Tim Shaw were doing their usual double act talking about many of their past projects and interviewing celebrity guests such as ex F1 driver and presenter Tiff Needell.

And for those who can’t afford a luxury or classic car there is an opportunity to take a passenger ride in their favourite model and raise money for deserving causes.

The Sporting Bears Motor Club is on hand – its members bring along their own cars (everything from a Rolls Royce and Aston Martin to an AC Cobra and Ford Mustang) and then

take visitors out on 20 minute road drivers for a donation.



Sporting Bears.

With everyone on the stand offering their time and cars for free all the money goes direct to selected children's charities and each year they are able to raise around £250,000 for these causes.

Organisers were forecasting up to 70,000 visitors over the four days of the show with last year's total of 47,000 visitors having already been matched by advance ticket sales and almost as many on-the day visitors expected.

The British Motor Show is on NOW (Friday 19 August) runs until Sunday 21 August – more details including ticket prices can be found at www.thebritishmotorshow.live

