British Motor Show Report

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Welcome to The British Motor Show…

The British Motor Show goes ahead after a year's delay…

…Chris Adamson reports (all words and photos by Chris).

Farnborough, best known for its aviation history, claimed a global automotive first this week

by hosting the first motorshow anywhere in the world since the start of the pandemic.

Delayed by 12 months due to Covid, the British Motor Show opened its doors at the Farnborough Exhibition Centre and while it proved to be an instant hit with the public it was a stretch to compare it with previous British Motor Shows (the last one being staged 13 years ago) or any of its counterparts around the world.

Missing was the traditional over-the-top razamataz of conventional brand name packed motor shows with their flashing lights, blaring music and dry ice new model reveals, bikini clad models, wall to wall celebrities and an excesses of corporate indulgence.

Only Ford was there in its own right with its Go Electric Roadshow, featuring their latest electric powered models including the new Mustang Mach-E. SsangYong was also out in force as a manufacturer debuting its new Musso while many other big name brands were represented by local and national dealerships or well-known prestige marque specialists.



Ford EV Roadshow.

Although the vast hangar-like main hall is big, it doesn't have the scope of the NEC so the choice of models on each stand was limited and there was only one car getting its world debut, the electric AC Cobra series 1.

Founder and show organiser Andy Entwhistle admitted from the start that the four-day event was targeting families rather than dedicated petrol heads eager to see the latest products from the big name marques.



New models in main hall...



More new models in main hall.

This was to be a more interactive celebration of all things automotive with plenty of hands-on experience for visitors – and it seemed to appeal to the target audience with over 40,000 pre-event ticket sales and even on day one (with 8,000 visitors according to the organisers) the steady stream of visitors was dominated by families herding small children from stand to stand.

As well as marque dealerships, the main hall was filled with a mix of automotive suppliers including event title sponsors, on-line car outlet Cinch, plus a selection of classic displays such as a line-up of cars from 100 years of the motor show, as well as custom car stands, games consoles and motoring products to take home.



100 Years of the Motor Show



Classic Citroëns.



Custom cars.

Another event partner National Geographic had a high profile through its popular television series Car SOS with presenters Tim Shaw and Fuzz Townshend on hand each day meeting fans and hosting regular interviews with a variety of celebrities and automotive influencers, including motoring presenter Vicki Butler-Henderson, YouTube legend Yianni Charalambous and BTCC driver Ash Sutton.



Car SOS.

Outside of the hall the vast site was able to offer lots of other attractions for all ages – one of the most popular being the young driving experience where under 17s could drive cars which was sold-out for the first day within a short time of opening.



Young Driver Experience.

The show also featured an Automotive Careers Expo aimed at encouraging young people into a career in the automotive sector.

Those with a strong stomach could take a passenger ride in a drifting Caterham around a tight course of cones or sit in the hot seat with stunt driver Paul Swift.



Caterham drifting.

Motoring journalist Mike Brewer, best known for his Wheeler Dealers programme, was the host of the Live Action area where he was introducing displays by some of the latest models from top-end manufacturers.

More fast and furious action was to be found in the motorsport arena with car control exhibitions by a variety of motorsport machinery.

Static outdoor displays provided something for every petrol head including a mouth-watering Supercar paddock crammed with wall to wall Ferraris and McLarens and a classic car complex, the temporary home of numerous car clubs from early Citroens to Minis, MGs

and Porsches.



Supercar Paddock…

In an attempt to get away from the appearance that the event is a cross between a trade fair and a funfair, the show programme devoted a large proportion of its pages to the ‘Select Electric’ element in a second smaller hall.

This featured a selection of the latest electric models available for leasing, such as the Tesla Model 3, Porsche Taycan, Mini Electric, Renault Zoe, VW ID.4 and Mercedes EQA plus electric motorcycles and scooters, electric vans as well as electric conversions of classic cars (prices starting from £35,000).



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Classic Morgan converted to electric.

There was also a Tech Theatre with presentations on aspects such as how EVs work, hybrid cars, Emobility and servicing EVs. Adjacent to the hall was a short driving route for potential buyers to try out different models.



EV commercial.

While this was an admirable aspiration to promote future automotive options it was rather stuck out on a limb at the fringe of the show site and it appeared that not everyone was making it that far.

Promoted as a family show (and conveniently timed for the school holidays) the event succeeded, but as the successor to the heady days of the British Motor Show at Earls Court with its international prestige and place at the heart of the motor industry, there is no comparison, something the organiser Andy admitted: “We were absolutely blown away with how busy we were on our opening day and with the reception of the show in general, with some brilliant feedback from our guests.

“We wanted to reinvent the motor show concept, make it more family-friendly, more engaging and more interactive and we have achieved just that.”

The show has a five year contract with Farnborough and the organiser has already announced that there will be two additional halls available next year.