



# BYD Dolphin hatchback – Background and First Impressions

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) tells all about this new kid on the block electric hatchback...

If you have used a Nokia 3310 mobile phone, Apple i-pad or ridden on a new Transport for London electric bus, then you have already experienced BYD technology.



The Chinese battery technology business which has powered these landmark products has a global footprint powering many familiar items, and is about to become a major player in the electric car market. The biggest company you've probably never heard of is now assembling a UK network of over 30 showrooms working with some of Britain's major groups and in 12 months time will be more than doubling this number on the back of deliveries of its Atto3 suv, Dolphin hatchback and Seal sports coupé models, each specifically targetting sectors which are thriving.

One of the next to come on stream will be in the Welsh capital, Cardiff. At the launch of the C-segment hatchback Dolphin, BYD UK head of marketing Mark Blundell, was very bullish. He said, "Build Your Dreams was launched 28 years ago by an enterprising engineer who saw the potential for new energy products and one of the first supply agreements was with Nokia for their famous 3310 mobile phone, now a classic of its time. They also put the batteries into some of the Apple i-pads and saw the potential to scale up for transport and struck a deal with Alexander Dennis to build the electric buses used by Transport for London."

So, its experience and knowledge is now turning towards private cars and its impact could be as significant as the Nokia and Apple products were in their fields. BYD makes the largest number of PHEV systems for cars in the world.

All models feature Forward Collision Warning, Autonomous Emergency Braking, Rear Collision Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Alert and Rear Cross Traffic Brake, Lane Departure Prevention and Emergency Lane Keeping Assist. Adaptive Cruise Control and Intelligent Cruise Control add to the enjoyment of driving.

The panoramic camera provides the driver with 360-degree visibility for safe vehicle manoeuvring. In addition, a Blind Spot Detection System, Electronic Stability Control, Traction Control, Hill Descent Control, Automatic Vehicle Hold, and Traffic Sign Recognition with Intelligent Speed Limit Control are included as additional driver aids. In their press material, BYD say the Dolphin's Blade traction battery is unlike many others



powering rivals and is cobalt-free, using Lithium Iron-Phosphate as its cathode material, which offers a much higher level of safety than conventional lithium-ion batteries due to its thermal stability, and uses less energy for specific power output. It is warrantied for up to 8 years or 125,000 miles.

Dolphin is being launched with a 60.4 kWh LFP Blade Battery packing a 265 mile range and will be followed by a 44.9 kWh LFP Blade Battery with the estimated range of 211 mile for Active and 193 mile for Boost. The four model range of Active, Boost, Comfort and Design Dolphins cost between £26,195 and £31,695. The top spec launch model Dolphin Design we drove has the 60.4 kWh battery and 150 kW motor equivalent to 204 PS and will take an 88 kW charger lifting from 30 to 80% capacity in under 30 minutes, and costs £31,695 including standard big sunroof, vehicle to load ability, privacy rear glass and wireless charging.

With the 60.4 kWh Blade Battery and a permanent magnet synchronous motor, the BYD DOLPHIN can accelerate from 0 to 62 mph in just 7 seconds and has 310 Nm (229 lb.ft) of torque heading towards a top speed of 99 mph.

There are four driving modes include Sport, Normal, Economy, and Snow to suit driving different conditions and preferences.

The range is being enhanced by the BYD thermal heater which, like an air pump for a house, actually extracts heat from surroundings and turns this into electricity which it pushes into the battery and it's so good it can extend the winter range by 15% - and this is in addition to the recuperated power from a regenerative braking system.

The heated front seats have a six-way electric adjustment for the driver and a four-way electric adjustment for the front passenger, while rear seats can split 60:40 allowing the 345 litre (12.18 cu.ft) boot to be expanded to 1,310 litres (46.26 cu.ft).

Mark Blundell said that in October 2023 BYD sold 301,000 cars globally after being in the market for just eight months after introducing the Atto3, now quickly following with the



Dolphin and the Seal by the end of this year. This rate of growth combined with the carefully selected dealer groups which will open their showrooms in coming years will see the current 25 outlets rise close to 90 by the end of 2024, supported by stand-alone service centres to infill the sales outlets.

BYD believe the equipment, costs, performance and warranty will be attractive to businesses and leasing companies as well as retail buyers and it's eyeing the Motability sector which has been overlooked by higher priced rivals' newest models.

The company is giving new buyers a credit equivalent to 3,000 miles of charging with Shell Recharge stations at 15 ppkW hour discount.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The sweeping curvaceous lines of the Dolphin immediately turn heads and other motorists screw up their eyes to read the letters BYD on the front and back of the Dolphin.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Inside the look is different to most current models and the unique selling point must be the swivelling large infotainment screen which some may consider a gimmick but which we found very convenient when following an input route directions. It turns through a button on the left spoke of the steering wheel or a virtual button on the screen itself.

Major controls are modern and simple as in most evs so a driver simply has to point it, select drive or reverse and away you go with the powertrain doing everything for you, unless you want to select a particular mode for conditions.





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Power take up is very good, particularly in the Sport setting but we found the rolling action of the secondary switches not particularly precise and they felt a bit cheap in operation and finish, a contrast to the interior's colourful and bright detailing across the fascia and around the door casings.

The steering lacked good precise feedback and the turning circle was larger than expected but the brakes quickly slowed it when needed and without drama.

As with nearly all electric models we've tested, the very low mechanical noise meant any road rumbles seemed exaggerated and therefore more noticeable.

Access was good, seating extremely comfortable with reasonable adjustment range and the boot was modest for a car in this class but easy to load and empty.





There was no opportunity to verify the range over a short test route but playing with the driving modes did produce varying distance predictions.

The BYD Dolphin absorbed road bumps and potholes very well without much body roll and was generally comfortable and roomy but it was not sporting in feedback apart from the quick pickup when encouraged to perform. Roadholding was good on dry surfaces we encountered with no handling vices to report.

## VERDICT

With keen pricing, a good specification, reasonable range and quick charging the BYD Dolphin will appeal to many buyers considering their next zero emissions car and it's likely to be something they have not only unheard of but also under-estimate.



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