David Miles’ Motoring News Round-up No. 7

Published: May 22, 2020

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/david-miles-motoring-news-round-up-no-6-2/



ALL-NEW HONDA JAZZ INSPIRED BY FORMULA 1 HYBRID EXPERTISE

MOTORING MILESTONE NEWS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED…

…By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

With the continued absence of new cars to evaluate or product launches to attend I’m still sifting through newspapers and the dwindling supply of worthwhile press releases to keep readers in the picture as to what might be of interest in the motoring world.

Not pulling together

If the current political situation re the COVID-19 arrangements were the Eurovision Song Contest or a football match the scoreline would probably read – *UNITY AND HARMONY* – NIL v *DISCORD* – LOADS.

It seems as though getting the country back close to normal life, if it ever will be, has given opponents of the Government ample ammunition to muddy the political waters. What happened to unity and having a clear fully supported direction to travel in?

The blame game has started between ministers, officials and scientists and even the media is getting 'stick' for not reporting the seriousness to the UK of COVID-19 sooner. Fingers are being pointed in all directions.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland now have their own timetable and rules about coronavirus measures. The UK Government has asked those who cannot work from home to go back to work if it's safe to do so. Commuters in London, and other towns/cities, have been asked to limit use of public transport and to walk or cycle to work. Wider cycle lanes and pavements are being introduced.



Wider cycle lanes for many towns and cities to aid travelling to work.



Still congested for London Tube travellers as this picture by the Daily Mail shows.

In London, with more commuters likely to be using their cars, Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan responded by implementing a 30% rise in the cost of driving in the city apparently to plug a hole in his transport funding. Cynically the £11.50 a day Congestion Charge, which had been suspended for the last two months, was reinstated on Monday 18 May but as before electric cars are exempt. A new higher rate of £15 a day will come into force from 22 June and will be extended to operate seven days a week until 10pm rather than 6pm but NHS and social care workers will be exempt.

For good measure ‘Genghis’ as he is known by some in London, Khan’s has also reintroduced the ULEZ ultra low emission zone levy of £12.50 a visit for car users whose

older cars don't meet the latest emissions standards. Khan's pronouncements came after the Government had already agreed to a £1.6 billion rescue package for Transport for London which also allowed for an above inflation rise in bus and Tube fares from January.

A further example of not pulling together is the back to school – or not arrangements which has also caused politically inspired wrangling between the Government and the left wing Unions. The Government say it's as safe as reasonably possible for certain age groups to return, the teacher's Unions say not and so the teachers and parents are in the middle of the argument. If some parents are needed back to go back to work they need their children back in school.

The UK, now in recession, already has a £300bn debt to pay off which is the largest in 300 years. So Britain needs to implement commonsense to get the wheels of business working again to minimise massive increases in personal and business taxation needed over many years to come to rebalance the GB Plc accounts. And just a reminder Brexit has to be sorted by the end of this year.

Even a winner can lose big time



Sir James Dyson with his ill-fated electric large SUV.

Top of the annual Sunday Times Rich List is Sir James Dyson whose wealth increased £3.6bn in the past year to £16.2bn, the first time the Wiltshire based inventor's wealth has topped the Rich List.

But it all didn't go well for Dyson, best known for his popular vacuum cleaners and other household devices. Despite topping the Rich List this year he had a failure to the tune of a £500m loss for his company. This was caused by his efforts to build a seven-seater, all electric large SUV with a 600-mile driving range. But he pulled the plug on the programme because it would have been too expensive at around £150,000 each vehicle just to recoup its costs. The Dyson SUV would have been a competitor to Tesla's upcoming SUV model.

Given the move to use fuel efficient small cars for commuting again following the coronavirus period perhaps it might, in hindsight, have been better to produce a smaller all-electric commuter or family car with the popular SUV styling and sell loads of them at affordable prices. Certainly with the upmarket appeal of other Dyson products it would have

been an ideal must-have brand to compete with the current small electric vehicles like the e-MINI which are ideally suited for commuting and school-run functions. Sometimes it's smarter to think small.

Alternative thinking for future holidays



Camping, caravan or motorhome UK stay at home holidays this year.

With overseas holidays seriously in doubt this year, even if so called air-bridges between low risk countries can be opened up which looks doubtful, are we prepared to accommodate the 14-day quarantine period being proposed when re-entering the UK? Perhaps we should be planning for staycations this year and beyond.

With hotels and B&Bs unlikely to be fully available or even if they are, high on our choice

list caravanning could be the answer. Either large static units on caravan parks, glamping or towing caravans or even motorhomes, all could meet the needs for those wanting to get away with a UK holiday this year. It's could be a try before you buy scenario.

The Camping and Caravanning Club which has more than 700,000 members is calling upon the Government to provide greater clarity on how the sector can safely reopen and operate campsites.

Certainly there seems to be pent-up demand from families who see caravanning as a solution with caravan and motorhome dealerships and caravan parks all reporting increased enquiries from potential customers.



Tow your holiday home with you.

Pricewise a very large luxury motorhome can cost close to £180k but the price reduces considerably as you move down the scale to more modest units and even rental camper vans can be had for around £21 a day. Then of course there are cheaper to buy used caravans sitting on driveways looking for new owners and caravan sales/rental centres all with models to meet budgets and the towing abilities of the family car in a time of austerity.



Don’t like towing, buy or rent a six-berth motorhome.

Oops it all went wrong for some Volkswagen customers with PCP contracts



A VW Tiguan mid-sized SUV, popular PCP purchases…

Volkswagen Financial Services mistakenly took money from the accounts of drivers who wanted to hand back their PCP scheme vehicles during the coronavirus lockdown.

Under a PCP personal purchase finance plan drivers pay a deposit and normally at least three years of monthly payments for their car then either give it back, make a ‘balloon’ payment of the rest of its value or trade it in for another PCP deal. Some seven million UK people have bought cars on finance deals worth over £58bn over the past three years with 80% of that being through a PCP.

This VW slip up came about when some drivers had tried to hand back their cars and didn’t want to buy another one. Later some found their bank statements they had been billed for the balloon payment amounts even though they had told their dealership by phone or email they didn’t want to keep the car.

Unfortunately due to the lockdown some customers couldn't physically hand the cars back to the dealerships as they were closed and the dealers couldn't collect the cars as their staff were furloughed so the automated billing process went into action. The company has apologised for the error and will refund customers as soon as possible and collect the unwanted cars.

e-scooters could be a cheaper way to commute to work



e-scooter trials to begin in the UK.

The Government is to fast-track trials to see if it is possible to allow two-wheeled electric e-scooters onto our roads as a cheaper way to help employees to get back to work.

These e-scooters look like child's transport but are capable of up to 30 mph but 12.5 mph is being touted as the legal restricted top speed. They can cost from around £200-£300 but Ducati have just introduced posh designer ones at ten times that price.



The new Ducati PRO2 e-scooter.

Although already being used illegally on our roads, cycle lanes and pavements which can incur £300 fines, there have been fatalities for their users. Solicitors are calling for e-scooters to meet safety standards, users to have mandatory insurance cover, there needs to

be a minimum riding age, a proven knowledge of the Highway Code, suitable licence and compulsory helmet.

Manufacturers will drive up new car demand with attractive purchase options

With UK car dealerships provisionally set to open up for showroom visitors in June if they meet the social distancing requirements there will be no lack of financial incentives to get new and used car sales moving again. As the boss of Vauxhall said, what is the point of starting full production again unless we have showroom avenues open to customers.

Skoda, the Czech arm of the Volkswagen Group, is offering PCP car payments free for three months and reducing the deposits required by up to £4,250. These contribution amounts vary but cover the brand's Fabia, Kamiq, Scala, Karoq, Octavia, Kodiaq, Superb and Superb iV models. Three year roadside assistance is also included and service packages are available from £99.



Skoda’s new Scala roomy family hatchback.

All cars must be ordered by 1 July 2020 and delivered by 1 October 2020. Although Skoda dealerships are currently still closed customers can view and order on-line or by phone via their virtual on-line website.

SEAT, the Spanish arm of the VW Group, are not lagging behind with finance offers either. Their range of incentives for buying as new car using their Solutions Personal Contract Plan PCP will pay between £1,000 and £3,000 deposit contribution as well as a three month payment break. There is also another £500 donation on offer if an order is placed before the 30 June as well as a two services offer for £149.



SEAT’s popular Ateca mid-sized SUV.

Mitsubishi Motors in the UK in collaboration with OVO Energy are reintroducing their 10,000 Free Green Miles offer for customers buying the Outlander PHEV plug-in hybrid SUV. The offer is available to Mitsubishi Buy Online customers who order a new car between now and the end of September. Customers can reserve a new vehicle for £99 and have free home delivery.



Mitsubishi's Outlander PHEV plug-in hybrid SUV.

New model news

Kia's very popular Sportage SUV gets a revised model line-up change. The new range now

has a four trim level line-up with the most significant change is the introduction of a new ‘3’ grade joining ‘2’, GT-Line and GT-Line S specification levels.



New Grade ‘3’ Kia Sportage model.

Prices start from £23,445 with all models gaining ‘frameless’ eight-inch touchscreen sat-nav with the latest UVO Connect telematic system, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay also standard fit on every model.

The range still consists of 2WD and 4WD models depending on the engine of choice and these include 1.6 GDI 130 bhp petrol and 1.6 T-GDI 174 bhp turbo petrol plus 1.6 CRDi 134 bhp diesel with a 48-volt mild hybrid function. Manual and auto transmissions are also available depending on the engine chosen.

Ford is keeping the sales pressure on in the popular double cab pickup market with the introduction of their Ranger Thunder special edition model. Just 4,500 of these will be available in Europe, 1,400 of them for the UK market priced at £32,965 excluding VAT. The existing Ford Ranger line up is the UK's best selling pickup range.



Ford's new Ranger Thunder double cab pickup.

Derived from the Ranger Wildtrack series the Thunder is powered by Ford's 2.0 litre bi-turbo EcoBlue turbodiesel engine with 213 hp and 500 Nm (369 lb.ft) of torque with 4WD via a 10-speed auto gearbox. The high specification includes full leather upholstery and 18-inch black alloy wheels.



Ford Ranger Thunder front interior.

Ford incidentally has started production at their UK plants this week, petrol engines at Bridgend South Wales plant and diesel engines for cars and vans at Dagenham. They are also continuing to produce at Dagenham their own face masks for employees.

SsangYong are introducing their 2020 model year updated Tivoli compact SUV.



SsangYong’s revamped Tivoli compact SUV .

With updated styling and revised petrol engines at prices starting from just £13,995 and for good measure they are covered by a seven year/150,000 mile warranty. The new petrol engines on offer are a 1.2 litre, three cylinder turbo petrol GDi-T unit with 128 hp and manual gearbox, a new 1.5 litre four cylinder GDi-T turbo petrol 163 hp unit and an uprated 1.6 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel unit with 136 hp, both these units are matched with manual and automatic gearbox options.

Spec levels are EX, Ventura, Ultimate depending on the engine of choice and prices top out at £22,995 for the 1.6 diesel auto with Ultimate spec.

Honda has announced they will restart product at their Swindon factory of the Civic range from June although the facility is due to closer permanently next year. However they have released news that their new Japanese built Jazz supermini sized hatchback range will include their eHEV system when it goes on sale later this year.



New Honda Jazz with F1 hybrid technology.

This powertrain is newly developed for Jazz and engineered to deliver optimum fuel efficiency and an enjoyable driving experience. It consists of two compact, powerful electric motors connected to a 1.5 litre DOHC i-VTEC petrol engine, a lithium-ion battery and a fixed-gear CVT auto transmission via an intelligent power control unit, which all work harmoniously together to provide a smooth and direct response.

This technology apparently comes from Honda's F1 knowledge which recycles energy and

harnesses it to charge the battery to support the petrol engine when needed for strong performance.

The new Jazz line-up will have SE, SR and EX spec levels with prices ranging from £18,985 to £21,385. In addition it is expected that an SUV styled variant known as Crossstar EX will also be included priced at £22,635.



New Honda Jazz.

Our need for speed could be provided by F1 soon

Our need for speed could soon be granted if only via the television, radio and on-line services. The delayed 2020 F1 season is scheduled to get underway now with double-header races in Austria on 5 July with the second race a week later on 12 July. The teams and other personnel such as marshals, medics and TV crews will be operating in a ‘bubble isolation’ environment. No spectators will be allowed.

Subject to that going ahead and approval by the British Government that the 'bubble isolation' measures will comply with our quarantine requirements Silverstone Circuit is expected to also host two race meetings. The first on 26 July and the second on 2 August. Again no spectators or guests will be allowed. But at the time of writing, despite seven of the ten F1 teams being based in the UK, it appears unlikely the Government will lift the quarantine requirement for F1. If that happens the Silverstone races are likely to be replaced by ones at Hockenheim in Germany

With the 2020 F1 season not yet started, the silly season for 2021 is already underway with Sebastian Vettel leaving Ferrari to be replaced by Carlos Sainz Jnr. from McLaren and Sainz replaced at McLaren by Daniel Ricciardo from Renault. That leaves a seat to be filled at Renault and could Fernando Alonso be that person, could it be Vettel or will these changes shuffle the driver's pack even more? Time will tell.



All change in the F1 driver market for 2021.

David sums up his review this week by saying, “…In the meantime, stay safe, stay alert and drive safely”.