Kia goes from strength to strength…

Published: November 30, 2021

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kia-goes-from-strength-to-strength/



Kia Picanto X-Line facia.

Kia’s Generation Game Changer – by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

For a generation of motorists it’s difficult to think that Kia Motors UK never existed and for others it’s hard to believe how far they have come in 30 years.

Entering UK showrooms in 1991 with the rebadged Mazda 121 selling as the Kia Pride, the Korean brand registered 1,800 sales, but that was just a ripple of what was to come.

The following year registrations doubled and they have continued on a remarkable growth path ever since. The commissioning of an engine and car manufacturing factory in Slovakia in 2006 eased their push into Europe and the history books.

Individual models have picked up numerous business, customer and media awards over three decades and Kia Motors UK has also been singled out for its performance.

Today, Kia Motors UK expects it will register about 90,000 sales this year, and that very conveniently equates to 1,875 models a week, overtaking their entire sales in 1991.

Still more sales are expected to stack up over the next year as it introduces new generation models of its Sportage SUV and Niro crossover models and facelifts its

others beginning with the new look Ceed hatchback.

It has heavily invested engineering, design and finance in the future of electric vehicles and in late November pumped millions of euros into the Ionity power charging network across Europe which provides ultra-fast 350kW public points and can recharge suitable models in just 18 minutes.

Kia EV6 Crossover



Kia EV6 77.4 kWh GT-Line S AWD.

The first to benefit from that will be the latest pure-electric Kia EV6. It joins the e-Niro and Soul EV and together the three model series' have accounted for over 14% of Kia UK registrations as it marked its highest ever October sales in Britain with 7,436 new cars leaving showrooms, a 22.1% rise on the same time last year.

The Kia EV6 brings a new, serious and practical offering to the market for executive cars with a ten-model range in four trim levels, three power outputs with rear or all-wheel-drive from £41,620 to £58,345.

After a brief test drive last week at a Kia media event of the all-wheel-drive EV6 GT Line variant I think it will become the benchmark for executive electric cars in future. Until now it has been Tesla which defined the direction of electric cars, but what that offers in technology has been overtaken by the stylish EV6 where looking different can drive a decision.

It is unmistakably head-turning as the original Tesla was a decade ago, but the EV6 is a

Crossover style five door long wheelbase hatchback for the next decade. Inside its sophistication and refinement is defined by simplicity and smooth lines including a ‘flying’ central console and minimum switchgear.

But it’s more than that because it drives outstandingly well as the 321 bhp 77.4 kWh battery with its front and rear electric motors push it along in near silence with expertly extracted road noise. It’s almost surreal sophistication.



Kia EV6 77.4 kWh GT-Line S AWD.

Not only is it quick off the mark and when overtaking but it can comfortably sit four or five people so long as they don’t have a lot of luggage and it can cover about 300 miles before recharging. Highly sophisticated on-board electronics determine the best rate of charge

without the user having to select anything and it will work on the 800V ultra-fast stations slowly coming into service.

If you cannot find one of these or a regular fast charger, you can plug into a domestic three-pin box for an overnight top up.



EV6 77.4 kWh GT-Line S AWD.

The EV6 is a lively car with excellent handling and grip, helped by the very low centre of gravity created through the under-floor battery pack.

The Kia Picanto city car



Picanto X-Line.

At the other end of the range and market, the Kia Picanto city car still represents remarkable value for money across a near 14-model range from £11,450 to £16,795 with a choice of 1.0 litre 66 bhp or 99 bhp engines, manual or automatic transmissions.

Unashamedly a sporting city car in the tradition of a warm-hatch, its 99 bhp powertrain and crisp gearbox were a delight on twisting country roads, its deeply shaped seats helping locate the driver and take the edge off the bumps which beat the suspension on bad bits of roads.

It is roomy for two, a tight fit for four with little rear legroom and a small boot behind, and as horses for courses go, it does a good job and does it with a feeling of being solidly built.

There couldn’t be a bigger contrast between the Picanto GT and the EV6 but it shows that a modern car maker has to cater for a huge range of buyers with differing desires and needs.

Judging by the recent sales success of Kia Motors UK it is certainly rising to this challenge, building on some of the best of the old while offering something of the best of the new.



Kia Picanto X-Line.

Kia UK sales briefing

Kia anticipates ending 2021 with 90,000 new models registered over the 12 months but advance orders and expected repeat business suggests this total figure will exceed 95,000

sales over the coming year in Britain.

If that does happen the current 6.6% UK market share could rise higher, said John Hargreaves, General Manager Fleet and Remarketing at Kia UK Limited.



Kia Head of Fleet John Hargreaves.

How we buy, lease and increasingly hire our cars is what Kia Motors UK has been looking

at. With car prices rising it has seen a growth in the daily rental side of businesses and more retailers are providing cars for this sector where drivers simply hire a model to suit a particular purpose for a few days and then change to another model when needed.

Businesses are more often requesting electric or hybrid models to follow their own green credentials and Kia has a wide range to supply them, he said.

The semi-conductor shortages have put pressure on supplies and replenishing stock but Kia said it is managing the situation in conjunction with its dealers.

The current rising prices of used models are unlikely to be sustained as 2022 develops and dealers will be carefully watching the trends, he went on.

For new electric vehicle drivers they're more anxious about network anxiety than range anxiety, he explained.

"Drivers know what distances their car will cover on a charge and have the technology to find a recharging point, but their issue then lies with whether that point will be busy or not working."

The car makers have done a lot but there is still some way for power providers to go to ensure the charging network meets the needs of the new cars now coming into the market which are electric only, he said.