The new MG4

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MG4 Preview by Chris Adamson.

Photos: MG Motor.

Available this month, the new MG4 electric five door hatch-back is a dramatic change in direction for the famous British marque in many ways; both in areas you can see and those you can’t.

One of the most striking features of the MG4 is how it looks; in recent years the Chinese owned brand has tended to be rather conservative in its offerings but the new model is certainly designed to stand out in a crowd.



With no requirement for large amounts of engine cooling (i.e. a conventional fluid-filled radiator) the front end has been given a very dramatic finish with lots of swooping lines and sharp edges; the nose has an arrow head appearance with slim headlights and a deep air damp highlighted by tall running lights.



A neat feature is the installation of an active grille filter that allows a degree of under bonnet cooling but can then be closed to maximise aerodynamic efficiency – which, say its designers, can increase the EV range by as much as 10 per cent.

Concave, athletic sides are given a hint of SUV with low black rubbing strips and wide haunches while the rear end is almost as dramatic as the front with a distinctive split tailgate light panel and roof spoiler.

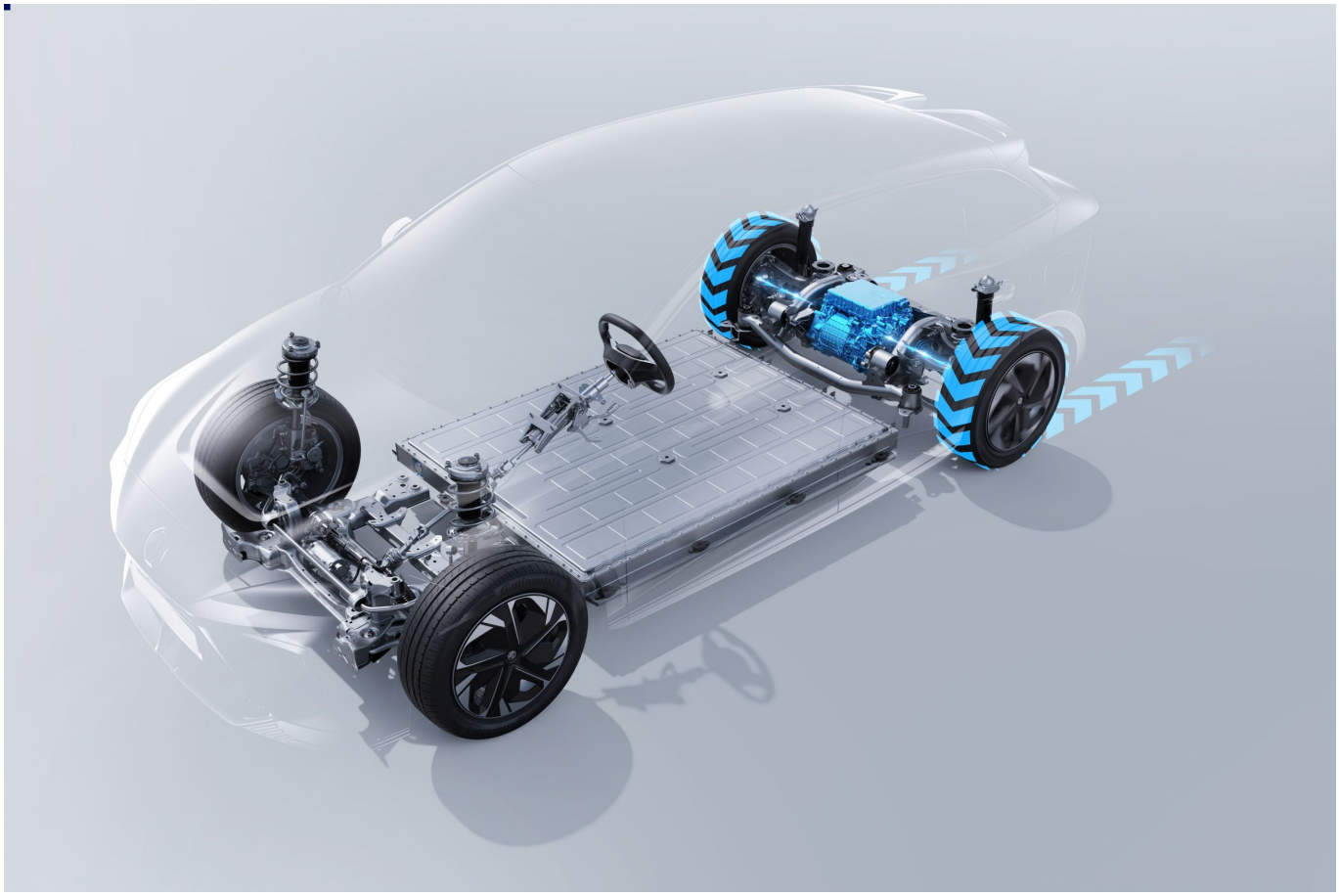


Under the skin the MG4 debuts MG's new Modular Scalable Platform which will form the basis of future MG models being able to adapt to a multitude of body styles and wheelbases ranging from 2,650 to 3,100mm (8.69 to 10.17 ft) while it also prepares the way for the use of battery swap technology.

MG boffins say that the new platform will also allow it to install all-wheel drive, so look out for an MG4 4×4 at some time in the near future.

Unusually for the latest crop of mainstream models, the MG4 is rear-wheel drive not front-wheel drive as had become the accepted norm for an EV.

Power to the rear wheels is provided by a rear mounted synchronous electric motor offering 184 lb.ft or 250 Nm of torque.



In turn this will derive its electrical energy from a choice of two battery packs (in a new battery structure that has a slimmed down height of 110mm or 4.33 in) starting with an entry level 51 kWh lithium iron battery that delivers 170 PS (125 kW) of power and promises a combined 218 mile (350 km) range, which is, perhaps, a little disappointing these days.

Despite being the lower powered of the two it has to pull slightly less weight overall (1,655 kg or 3,649 lb) so will hit 30 mph in 3.1 seconds and 62 mph in 7.7 seconds on its way to a 100 mph maximum.

It can be charged from 10 per cent to 100 per cent on a standard 7 kW AC domestic charger in seven-and-a-half hours or 10 per cent of 80 per cent in 40 minutes using a 50 kW

charging unit.

The alternative long range battery (and the one most people are likely to go for despite the additional £2,500 premium) is a higher power 184 lbft (250 Nm) 64 kWh Nickel Cobalt Manganese unit which promises a more encouraging combined range of 281 miles (450 km) on a single charge and a city range of 360 miles (579km).

Its statistics are 30 mph in 3.5 seconds and 62 mph in 7.9 seconds and a re-charge time of 35 minutes from 10 per cent to 80 per cent using a 150 kW DC rapid charger or 60 minutes on a 50 kW charger and nine hours to 100 per cent with a 7 kW connection.

The low profile battery packs and putting the electric motor at the rear contributes to create a near perfect 50/50 weight distribution with the promise of invigorating road-holding if the suspension and steering (yet to be tested) are up to the task.

MG describe the MG4 as a family sized vehicle and with the new platform – at 4.287 metres (14.06 ft) long it bridges the normal B and C sectors.

Despite being significantly shorter than its bigger sibling the MG HS, the MG4 has an almost identical wheel base at 2,705 mm (8.87 ft) which translates, with the contribution of the slim-line battery arrangement, into what is claimed to be one of the biggest cabin spaces in its class.

Passenger space is complemented by a sizeable if not exactly class-topping boot that will swallow 363 litres (12.82 cu.ft) or expand to 1,177 litres (41.57 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded.

Inside, the radical changes continue most notable being the absence of a conventional instrument cluster. Most rivals with digital instrumentation still choose to arrange these in familiar circular clusters visible through the steering wheel – but not MG.

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All the vital information on the vehicle operation and performance is show on a seven inch rectangular screen.

This is supplemented by a 10.25 inch floating centrally mounted touch and swipe colour screen for the infotainment system – here everything from the air conditioning, navigation and audio systems can be controlled either on the screen itself or via push button piano keys – there is even a voice activation option.

About the only other control the driver needs to operate is the rotary gear selector which sits in the central console and offers five driving modes: Eco, Sport, Snow, Custom and Standard. The driving experience can also be varied with four levels of regenerative braking.

One of the numerous high-tech gizmos making its debut on the MG4 is the start button for the electric motor which is located only on the key fob. Lots of the vehicle functions can also be operated from a Smart phone, such as locking and unlocking the doors.

The MG4 is initially being offered in six colours including Volcano Orange (as featured in these photographs) and three trims where the cheapest is the SE (£25,995) with the 55 kWh standard range battery that features: Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, iSMART app connectivity, rear parking sensors, 17 inch alloy wheels and automatic climate control.

Safety is covered by the MG Pilot Advanced Driver Assistance programme that includes: Active Emergency Braking with Pedestrian and Bicycle Detection, Lane Keep Assist with Lane Departure Warning, Traffic Jam Assist, Intelligent High Beam Assist, Adaptive Cruise Control and Driver Attention Alert.

Next up is the SE fitted with the long-range battery (£28,495) that comes with the active grille previously mentioned.

Topping the range is a Trophy designated model (£31,495) using the long range battery (the extra weight cutting its maximum quoted combined range to 270 miles). This version is

distinguished by a twin aero rear spoiler, rear central light bar with patterned effect, rear privacy glass and a two-tone black roof.

It gains: projector LED headlights, satellite navigation, six speaker audio, leather upholstery with heated front seats (six way electric seat for the driver) and heated steering wheel, mobile phone Bluetooth key, a 360 degree camera, Blind Spot Detection, Lane Change Assist, Rear Cross Traffic Alert and Door Opening Warning plus a wireless charging pad in the centre console.

All versions of course come with MG's seven year warranty.

VERDICT

With its striking looks, rear wheel drive, near perfect weight balance, the instant power delivery of an electric motor, the MG4 looks like it will finally return the Octagon badge to its sporting heritage with the addition of great use of internal space – now all we have to do it drive it and find out if it matches up to expectations.

Kim adds: Please watch this space for Chris's driving impressions; very soon, in due course.


MG4