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REFINISHER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

Edition 239

May - June 2025

FUTURE TECH DESIGN FOR REPAIR



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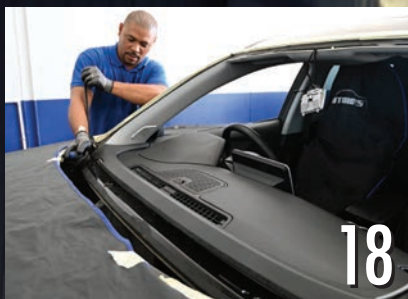


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Cover and contents:
Hyundai Motor's Insteroid
gaming-inspired concept.



Claire Macfie
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EDITORIAL

WHILE SETAs DELAY, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT EXPLODES

You might want to read about our training skills upliftment by Florida Panelbeaters in this edition and be heartbroken to discover that all the current body shop trainees get no financial reward and that, surprisingly, the free-market initiative has not received a single bit of assistance from the Seta.

Well, that's hardly surprising considering that the Seta's and their bloated bureaucracy are operating with public funds and a degree of what appears to be rampant corruption with their compulsory levies paid by employers which are meant to oversee learnerships, apprenticeships and skills upliftment in this sector of the supposed free enterprise system in South Africa.

Outa's investigation into questionable contracts into services which were exposed over seven years ago, things like the R163 million contract with Grayston Read, which is a false name, to change and receive exorbitant amounts. The many failed questions that lie unanswered by a Parliamentary enquiry are proof positive that the government cadre employment gravy train is alive and well with continued wasteful expenditure.

At least now Alan Beesley, MP, is continuing to apply pressure on the Minister of Higher Education with his demands from ActionSA Party.

ActionSA has called on the Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Nobuhle Nkabane, to streamline and reform the country's 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to curb excessive wasteful expenditure and ensure they deliver meaningful skills training for South Africa's youth.

Mandated to equip young people with relevant vocational skills, SETAs have instead become plagued by corruption, financial mismanagement, and inefficiency. In the last financial year, over R60 million was paid to directors across the 21 SETAs, while only 53 518 students enrolled in skills training programmes – just a third of the 149 000 targeted. This excludes millions wasted on travel, perks, and an excessively bloated bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, youth unemployment continues to spiral out of control. StatsSA's The Social Profile of the Youth, 2014-2024 report, published this week, reveals that youth unemployment, measuring the percentage of young people (15-34) actively seeking but unable to find work, has risen from 36.8% in 2014 to 45.5% in 2024. Additionally,

the number of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has climbed to 43.2%, up from 38.2% a decade ago.

Despite various policy interventions under the National Development Plan, South African youth remain locked out of economic opportunities due to a critical lack of skills. Instead of fulfilling their mandate, SETAs have become a revolving door of job creation for ANC-connected cadres, many of whom are repeatedly recycled across various boards and executive positions. Shockingly, seven SETAs received qualified audit reports from the Auditor-General, while others were flagged for serious financial irregularities.

There is no justification for maintaining 21 separate SETAs, each with a 15-member board – resulting in an excessive 315 board positions draining public funds. ActionSA demands urgent intervention to overhaul the SETA system. Instead of looking to burden South Africans with a VAT hike that will hit the poor the hardest, government should start by trimming the fat – because taxpayers shouldn't have to pay more when there's still so much waste to cut. It's like trying to fill a colander with more water without plugging any holes!

Let us see if this will make a dent in the Seta's ongoing trade training failures in 2025. The lack of professional training in the body shop trade remains a serious concern and this sector is considered a scarce skill which should have priority. The recent release of the current register of artisans – an initiative aimed at upholding industry standards and ensuring professional credibility – highlights this issue. Managed by the RMI, the register is designed to provide a structured listing of trained personnel with nationally recognised competency levels for the automotive industry.

However, the data reveals a troubling trend: for example, in 2014 there were around 2 000 automotive body repairers, but in 2024 it drops to 1 400, as well noting that in 2014 there were 1 300 spray painters as opposed to 917 in 2024. There is a sharp decline in employable trade experts. This makes it increasingly clear that relying on a single solution or a "great white knight" to rescue the industry is unrealistic. Instead, the emergence of more private training schools should be welcomed. They may very well be essential to addressing the shortfall and securing the future of skilled journeymen in the body shop trade.

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BMW X3 CROWNED 2025 SOUTH AFRICAN CAR OF THE YEAR



BMW Group South Africa is proud to announce the BMW X3 has been named the 2025 South African Car of the Year. This recognition highlights the strength of the locally produced BMW X3 and the ongoing momentum of the BMW Group's premium product portfolio.

Now in its 39th year, the South African Car of the Year Awards are hosted by the South African Guild of Mobility Journalists and sponsored by Old Mutual Insure. The awards recognise vehicles that set new benchmarks across key segments, with additional honours including the Jurors' Choice Award and the Motor Enthusiast's Choice.

Produced locally at BMW Group Plant Rosslyn since October 2024, the BMW X3 continues to play a strategic role in both local and global markets. With both plug-in hybrid and internal combustion variants manufactured at the plant, the BMW X3 reflects BMW Group's commitment to powertrain flexibility, production excellence and sustainable innovation. It also represents BMW Group Plant Rosslyn's continued evolution, supported by the reintroduction of a third production shift to meet growing global demand.

IBIS GLOBAL SUMMIT 2025 AGENDA UNVEILED



The agenda for IBIS Global Summit 2025 is now live, signalling the next step toward the collision repair industry's premier global event. Held from 24-26 June 2025 at Swissôtel: The Bosphorus in Istanbul – the summit will also unite senior leaders and decision-makers for two days of strategic discussion, knowledge sharing, and high-level networking. Themed "Shaping the Future: Leadership Through Collaboration", the event will spotlight pressing industry topics including economic trends, sustainability, leadership development, AI integration, reparability, insurability innovation, and the future of body shops.

Each session is designed to sharpen strategic thinking and foster meaningful partnerships. IBIS Conference Director Robert Snook emphasised the importance of open dialogue and cross-sector collaboration in driving progress. He highlighted that the 2025 agenda reflects the industry's evolving landscape and aims to equip attendees with the insights and connections needed to lead effectively. Set in historic Istanbul, a city symbolising innovation and cultural exchange, the summit offers a unique setting for global professionals to shape the future of collision repair through collaboration and shared vision.

ANDREW MARSH APPOINTED TECHNICAL DIRECTOR AT AUTOBODY BIBLE



Autobody Bible is your go-to source for everything related to auto body repair, detailing, and maintenance. Whether you're a seasoned professional, a DIY enthusiast, or simply a car lover, Autobody Bible provides expert tips, product reviews, and industry insights to keep your vehicle looking and performing at its best.

Their mission is to educate, inspire, and empower car owners with reliable, easy-to-follow guides and the latest trends in the auto body world. From paint correction to dent repair, they break down complex processes into simple steps, helping you achieve professional-quality results.

Andrew Marsh is a mechanical engineer, and an absolute asset to the Autobody Bible company. He is passionate about all things mechanical and has a wealth of knowledge. He worked in vehicle design and development as well as project management for 20 years. He then moved to Thatcham Research where he used his engineering knowledge to understand repair issues and looked after eScribe methods and times production. This saw a dramatic increase of data output volumes as well as quality. Andrew regularly presents to collision repair sector audiences and writes for several collision repair magazines, including Automotive Refinisher.

Visit www.autobodybible.com to find out more.

BIMOLA CLASSIC SPARES NOW AVAILABLE IN SA



The enthusiastic team of Bimola Classic Spares recently visited South Africa to reinforce their position of spares availability for the many and varied models introduced in the last decade from Italy where Bimola headed up a top-class range of ultimate racing and street going motorcycles.

Paolo Girotti the company president is upbeat about the new company's offer of genuine Bimola parts which works out of a well-defined warehouse to back-up the brands historical machines from headquarters in Tuscany with a great passion to keep the brand alive and well. It is complete with both a large warehouse and museum which consists back-up parts availability for their popular Bimola Suzuki SB6-8 along with Honda HB4 models and a raft of Ducati editions. From the early 1985 era of Bimola specialist machines, Paolo says that prospective customers can contact the company at bimolaclassicparts@gmail.com or call them direct on +39 0578 21986 to get back-up on the famous Bimola Rimini brand of world class machines.

REFINISH SURVEY

THE SILENT GROWTH OF LUXOR PAINTS IN THE REFINISH VALUE SEGMENT

Real Research has been monitoring the South African refinish market for the past decade. The studies have covered market share, competitor movement, new entries, distribution gaps, pricing, customer service levels and most importantly, the end-user needs and wants. About 5 years ago, Real Research noticed an uptick in the value segment of the market. This uptick was triggered by an overwhelming surge in value brands entering the market as well as a growing importance on cost. Traditionally, this value segment has been dominated by premium international brands bringing in lower priced value lines to compete in this growing market. Bearing in mind that over 85% of the vehicles on the road are uninsured, this market is massive. In fact, it accounts for over 60% of the entire refinish market and will only grow over time. Justin Swanepoel from Real Research states "Looking at the recently completed 2025 study and then tracking the numbers back to 2015, there is one brand that has a growth trajectory that is nothing short of extraordinary. And the numbers do not lie. Back in 2015, Luxor held a 5.2% market share, dwarfed by global industry giants. Right now, Luxor is the market leader in the value segment and the dwarfing has reversed. Over the last 10 years, Luxor has silently grown in the background and in the market share graphics, the rise of Luxor can clearly be seen tracked against the competitors. Several

factors have contributed to this success and I have listed these below."

Expanding distribution network: reaching new markets

A key driver behind Luxor's success has been its consistent and strategic expansion into new regions and a carefully developed no barriers distribution strategy. This expansion was driven by Luxor's focus on building strong relationships with distributors and ensuring its products were available to a wider customer and end-user base.

Hands-on service delivery: cultivating loyalty

Luxor has focused on building strong relationships with its distribution network and end-users, offering a hands-on personalised service and technical support. This hands-on approach have helped increase customer retention and fostered a sense of loyalty. Customers knew that when they partnered with Luxor, they were not just buying a product - they were gaining a trusted ally in the industry.

Aggressive marketing and sales approach: winning market share

Luxor made quick decisions on sales, marketing and market intelligence strategies as there was no international red-tape. The brand adopted an aggressive sales strategy from the outset, focusing on high-impact promotions, effective distribution partnerships, and direct market penetration. As a result, the brand steadily increased

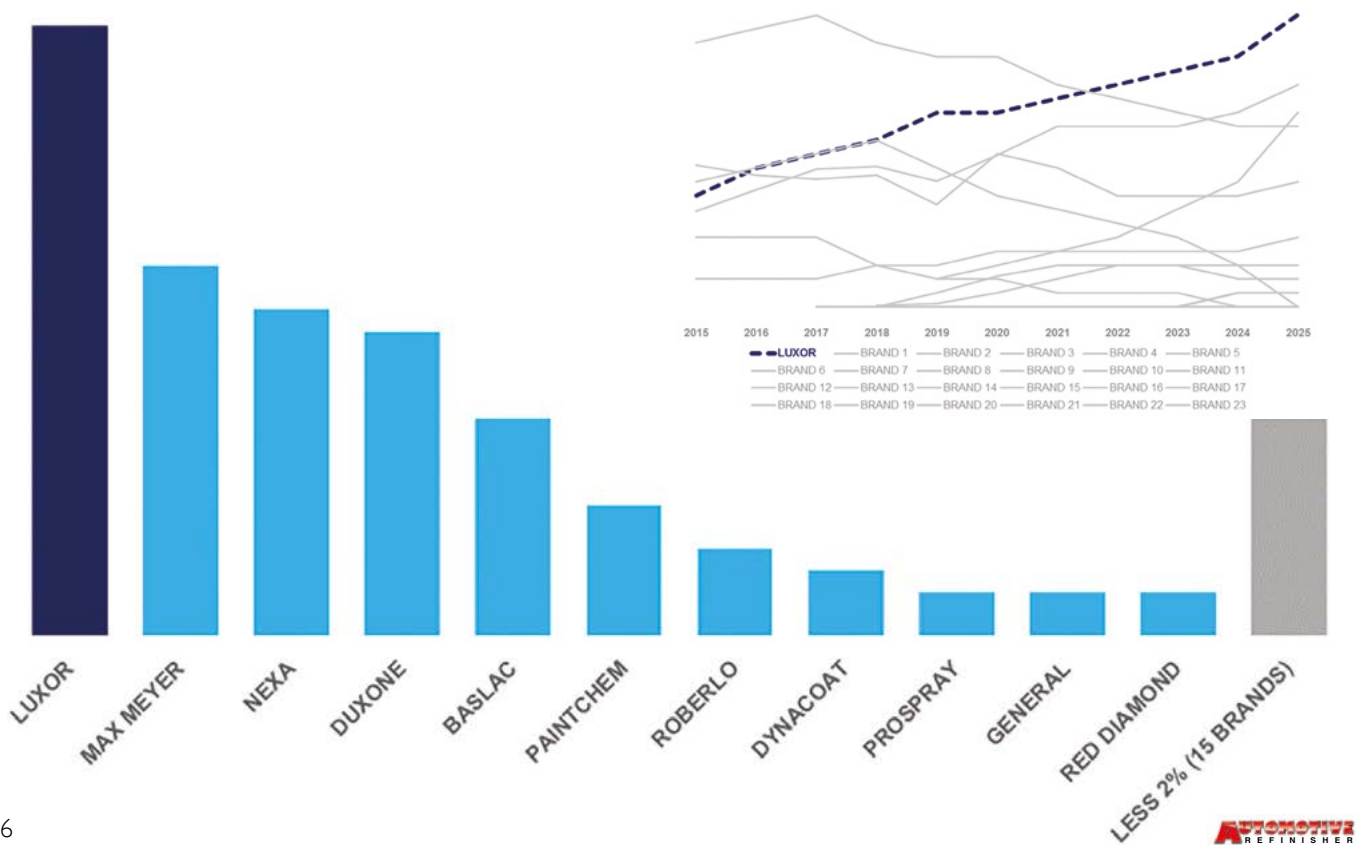
its market share year after year, ultimately securing a dominant position.

Local manufacturing: keeping costs competitive

While many international brands face high production costs and rising tariffs due to overseas manufacturing and importing, the Luxor locally manufactured model allowed Luxor to avoid such challenges. By producing its products locally, the brand could offer more competitive pricing versus imported brands. This has shielded Luxor from the rise in Premium international value brands coming in. Luxor could quickly adjust production volumes, meet customer demand, and reduce lead times, an advantage that helped the brand stay ahead of competitors. As tariffs and international trade barriers continue to rise, Luxor's setup is a major asset that positions it well for the future.

Justin states "As Luxor continues to innovate and expand, it is poised for continued success, proving that sometimes the best growth comes not from loud campaigns and big budgets, but from strategic, steady, and silent evolution. I look forward to watching this value market explode and like most, will always back the little guys".

Justin can be reached on 082 773 2839 or justins@realresearch.co.za for more information on how market, customer and competitor intelligence can be used to grow, or maintain your brand or product.





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SURVEY

KEY DRIVERS OF GROWTH IN SOUTH AFRICA'S REFINISH PAINT MARKET

Real Research



Real Research has been monitoring the South African refinish market for the past decade focusing on market share, competitor movements, distribution gaps pricing, customer service, and most importantly end-user needs. The annual end-user survey highlights the key drivers' brands must meet. The most recent study reveals some shifts in these drivers, such as price moving back to the top, increased demand for service and support, and a rise in new market entries, largely driven by global trade tariff events. Key drivers include:

1. Well-priced in the market (back to the top)

Price is always a significant consideration for end-users. The South African market is highly price-sensitive, and end-users often prioritise cost-effective options that provide good value for money. In fact, "well-priced in the market" is the key competitive advantage for brands aiming to capture market share. Brands that can balance quality with affordability will likely outperform their competitors.

2. Adhesion properties and great coverage

For professionals in the auto repair industry, the performance of the refinish paint is paramount. The paint must adhere well to surfaces and provide excellent coverage with fewer coats. These two drivers are critical for achieving a high-quality finish quickly and efficiently, especially in time-sensitive repair situations. These two attributes are highly valued by end users, as they directly impact the overall quality of the job and the time it takes to complete repairs.

3. Excellent customer service and support

Providing excellent customer service is essential for any business, but in the refinish sector, this goes beyond simply post repair delivery surveys. End-users expect prompt support, easy access to technical assistance, and quick resolution of any issues that arise during the repair process. A brand's reputation for supporting its customers is crucial to establishing long-term relationships and fostering trust.

4. Local manufacturing advantage (new driver)

This driver has been expected. Local refinish manufacturing is increasingly valued by end-users, who are keen on supporting domestic industries and minimising dependency on imports. Local manufacturing offers several advantages, including shorter lead times, reduced shipping costs, and more competitive pricing. Additionally, locally produced refinish products are less likely to be subject to international trade tariffs, which can increase the cost of imported goods, which in turn gets pushed down to the customers.

5. Good levelling properties and easy polishing

For professionals working in automotive refinishing, achieving a smooth, flawless finish is essential. Good levelling properties ensure that the paint spreads evenly and doesn't leave unsightly streaks or imperfections. In parallel, easy polishing is necessary to achieve a glossy, showroom-quality finish. Both of those factors contribute to the overall appearance and professionalism of the finished work, making them high-priority features for end users.

6. Colour matching and colour range

The ability to match paint colours precisely to the original finish of a vehicle is another non-negotiable expectation from end-users. Good colour matching and a wide range of colours are crucial for achieving seamless repairs and touch-ups. The demand for a wide variety of colours also allows end-users to cater to different customer preferences, which enhances their competitive edge in the marketplace.

7. Supply chain reliability (new driver)

A good supply chain and stock holding is essential to ensure that products are consistently available when needed, especially in high-demand situations. The ability to have stock on hand reduces lead times and can act as a buffer when global costs and trade barriers can change stock availability and costs overnight.

8. Fast drying time and sanding/buffing ease

Time is money in the refinish market, and end-users are looking for paints that dry quickly and are easy to work with. Fast hardness when dry ensures that the paint cures quickly, allowing professionals to proceed with sanding, buffing, and polishing without delays. Similarly, the ability to sand and buff easily contributes to faster, more efficient work processes, reducing overall turnaround times for repairs.

9. Brand reputation (new driver)

While brand reputation ranks lower in priority compared to some other drivers, it still plays an important role in the decision-making process. End-users tend to choose brands with proven reliability, trustworthiness, and a long-standing history of delivering quality products. Just remember, every brand has a born and die curve, meaning they need to reinvent themselves as time moves on.

10. Environmental friendliness (new driver)

Though environmental sustainability is an increasingly important consideration globally, it currently holds the least weight in the South African refinish market. Nevertheless, as global trends shift towards eco-consciousness, this driver may become more prominent in the future, particularly as regulations and younger customers/drivers' preferences evolve.

Real Research is closely associated to the automotive and refinish market, having consulted with both premium and value refinish and decorative brands over the past 10 years. The primary automotive basket includes competitor multichannel mystery shopping, consumer insights, competitor analysis, pricing analysis, feasibility studies, market size/share analysis, CX, UX, VOC, NPS, CSI, geo-spatial analysis, dash-boarding, online surveys, DIY surveys, F2F deep interviews and specialized panels.

Justin can be reached on 082 773 2839 or justins@realresearch.co.za for more information on how market, customer and competitor intelligence can be used to grow, or maintain your brand or product.



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MASTERING SANDING AND BUFFING

In collision repair, achieving a complete, safe, and quality repair comes down to understanding techniques like sanding and buffing that are part of the vehicle body repair, cosmetic and refinishing process. These steps are critical for a high-quality repair, but they require skill and attention to detail. As cars change, so do the materials and techniques, making it important to stay up to date.

The step-up process

Sanding and buffing both consist a step-up process, starting with coarser grits and working up to finer grits, eliminating deep scratches for professional results. Skipping steps or taking shortcuts can leave imperfections, creating more costly work, more materials, and a longer repair cycle time. Prep is everything. Proper sanding ensures paint adhered correctly, prevents visible scratches, and enhances the overall durability of the repair. Every step matter, from shaping filler to final polishing.

Wet vs dry sanding

Wet sanding in the refinishing process used to be more common but is not used as much anymore because it can cause moisture issues on exposed backside bare metal surfaces; plus, the runoff is bad for the environment. Dry sanding with dust extraction is more efficient. It keeps the shop cleaner and speeds up the process. However, there are still cases where wet sanding is useful, such as during the denibbing process or final finishing. The key is knowing when and where to use each method.

Hand sanding vs power sanding

The right tool makes all the difference. Hand sanding, especially with a block, keeps surfaces even and helps keep the body filler flat so it's not wavy. Power sanders, like dual-action (DA) sanders, are great for sanding, feather-edging and panel prep but tend to overcut fillers too fast and unevenly. Hand blocking is the best practice method when sanding body fillers. Battery-powered sanders also add flexibility, cutting down on air hoses and cords. Whatever the tool, the key is using the proper technique.

When feather-edging the material around a dent, using proper pressure is just as important as the tool itself. Pressing too hard with a DA sander can create uneven spots, while not applying enough pressure can result in an inconsistent surface finish. A light touch with controlled movement is the best approach.

Grit selection and step-up

The goal is to remove the deep scratches as you go. For example, if you start with a coarse grit like 80 to shape filler, you may need to step up to 120 then 180, then follow up with 220 or 240. Before priming a repaired area, you may need to feather-edge the area with 320 to 400. This step-up process will eliminate any deep scratches that may exist. After the primer process, it's not unusual to start blocking primed areas with 220 grit. This would need to be followed up with a finer grit, such as 320, and followed up again to the recommended suggested grit required by the paint manufacturer. Some paint manufacturers suggest sanding and finishing with 600 or finer before painting. Jumping grits too quickly can leave deep scratches that show through the clearcoat or final finish.

It is also important to use the right type of sandpaper. Film-backed abrasives last longer and provide a more even cut compared to traditional paper-backed versions. Investing in high-quality abrasives can save time and money in the long run.

Guide coat: a simple but essential step

A guide coat helps spot imperfections before moving to the next step. It makes scratches, pinholes and low spots easy to see.

by John Harford, Anton Verwijst & Luis Martinez



Powder guide coats are popular because they don't tend to bridge over imperfections or scratches like aerosol versions can. Skipping the guide coat might save a few minutes, but it often results in overlooked defects that become obvious after painting leading to costly rework.

Buffing

After the vehicle has been refinished, wet sanding and buffing will remove small imperfections in the new finish, such as dirt nibs. It follows the same step-up method – starting with a cutting compound to remove imperfections, then moving to finer polishes for a deep gloss. Using the right pads and keeping consistent pressure helps to eliminate swirl marks.

Temperature and humidity can also affect buffing. In hot weather, compounds dry quickly, so on large panels, try to buff smaller sections. In colder environments, buffing may take longer. Adjusting your technique based on conditions can make a big difference in the final result.

Best practises

Dry sanding with dust extraction is the standard now, reducing mess and environmental impact. Paint technology has also changed, so following manufacturer recommendations is key for proper adhesion and durability. Using waterborne paints and low VOC products is becoming more common to meet environmental regulations. Technicians must be aware of how these materials behave differently from traditional solvent-based systems and adjust their techniques accordingly.

Common mistakes

- Skipping grits – not following the step-up process can leave deep scratches that show through the paint.
- Over-sanding edges – too much pressure on edges can burn through layers, causing costly rework.
- Not cleaning between steps – leftover dust and debris can lead to imperfections.
- Using the wrong buffing pad – some pads cut aggressively, while others are made for polishing. Using the wrong pad can damage the finish. Buffing is generally done on fresh paint, which may still be soft or not fully cured. Using proper steps and materials is critical.
- Failing to check work under different lightning – some defects only show under certain light conditions. Moving the vehicle or using multiple light sources can help catch flaws before final delivery.

Ongoing learning

Collision repair techniques are always changing, and staying sharp is the only way to keep up. Education or training can help technicians build the skills needed for complete, safe, and quality repairs. Learning never stops, and investing time into continuous education leads to better efficiency, fewer mistakes, and higher-quality repairs.

Shops that encourage training often see better technician retention and fewer comeback jobs. Staying ahead of industry advancements, from new paint systems to evolving vehicle materials, is crucial for long-term success. Plus, with ADAS sensors built into or mounted behind many bumpers, some OEMs provide repair guidelines and limitations for specific areas while other OEMs require bumper cover replacement over repair to avoid system issues. Understanding manufacturer guidelines is essential to ensuring proper refinishing and ADAS performance, reducing liability issues.

At the end of the day, body shop work is all about prep. If you don't prep the panel before you fix it, it's not going to work out. It's the same with painting; do it the right way or do it over. It is hard work, but the results speak for themselves.



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FUTURE TECH

THE BEAUTY OF THE HUMBLEST PARTS AND DESIGN FOR REPAIR



Here is a picture of a flow drill screw developed EJOT (there are other providers of such technology) and some Lego (other systems are available). Both represent the pinnacle of many years in pursuit of an idea. In the case of the flow drill screw, the application of refined metallurgy and high-volume manufacturing processes that can make a sophisticated component like this for fractions of a penny.

Meanwhile, Lego, the original bluff, unyielding block – can be anything from a deep-sea empire to a space station, in the mind of the creator. It is an enabler of ideas – but take a closer look. Humble polymers with high gloss finish, able to engage or disengage with other blocks for years – not just 10 times. It is also a fine example of industrial design.

A vehicle has literally tens of thousands of components, many of which fall into the heading 'consumables'. Things that allow us to put larger parts together. The common nature and relatively low cost belie the sophistication of this 'stuff'.

Manufacturing centric product creation

The whole vehicle creation process is aimed at construction as well as initial sale. This is still how most vehicle manufacturer business models work. During the creative process there are many experts called to assist, and one group are the buyers. These people tend to look after a group of similar products and aim to get the best possible price for each component, deal by deal.

Others take care of how the part is going to be assembled, others look into how long the part will last, and some take care of the effect on repair. Yes, with the best will in the world, while the whole company knows full-well what repair means to competitiveness – especially in fleet – this tends to concentrate on routine maintenance rather than all aspects of the vehicle. Ironically the 'times' data that is used by providers such as Audatex and GT Motive in the main come from 'warranty' times.

The problem

As vehicle technology demanded more and more systems to address aspects of crash performance, enabling advanced driver assistance systems and addressing environmental impact, so the industry reacted by adding to rather than integrating functions. Adding multiple parts means for repairers having to remove multiple parts instead of larger, multi-function parts.

A Lego block or a flow drill screw are examples of items that instead of requiring additional parts to work, built some aspects into the part design. If it takes 100% effort to get a great component design, integration requires a further stretch by 10 or 20%. Above and beyond.

Overall, most vehicles are built on a manufacturing line where the assembled, painted body shell is fitted out via around 100 assembly points, each taking no more than 2.5 minutes to complete. This dominates everything a vehicle manufacturer thinks about. Aftermarket then becomes a process of managing expectation... you want to see a major structural aluminium alloy casting in the body structure? Well, prepare for a few hours of removing parts – lots of parts – before we see a thing.

A vehicle regardless of price point or powertrain is now demonstrably more sophisticated than even a decade ago, which is storing up problems for the near future. The days of designing specific parts to perform more or less just a single task is numbered.

Shouting from the roof tops

There is rightfully a recent call by a collection of organisations right across Europe and the UK, including FIA, to improve access to vehicle information, ensure software is at any point supported for 20 years, and many other good ideas. In other words, make the EU27 vehicle end of life directive work better.

This fine collection of aftermarket groups and insurers, however, may as well climb Mount Everest to proclaim the message. Right now,

new models are being created which will be first sold by 2029 – that's the lead time. So, decisions to help reparability are not going to be fixed now.

However, there is a real challenge ahead. What should a vehicle manufacturer do to compete with enthusiastic newcomers to the European market with significantly lower cost, and hence bigger profit margins? Not import tariffs – since the reaction affects export markets.

No, it's about doing not just the 'job' but higher levels of component and sub-assembly integration. In addition, to reduce new vehicle build cycle time, it should be much, much easier to assemble – which means it is far easier to take apart. Each component will need an investment in technology, making it do more than just one task.

This will not be 'free', and individual parts may increase in cost. If the integration is effective, which is not easy, then the number of 'special' parts dedicated to a given model might increase, but the overall repair time will decrease – and the part price impact should be manageable with negotiation based on the number bought each year.

One big happy family

To allow vehicle manufacturers to realise their dream of seeing customers ever again after selling a new car or bakkie, they need help. Step forward collision repairers and the better-quality service agents. These professionals buy a load of parts sold by vehicle manufacturers but need something more than an 'approved' sign. These professionals need support from manufacturers, which gives them a route to market in the mind of the vehicle owner.

Most 'approval' schemes are in effect the trade talking to itself. Owners of vehicles may prefer to use a collision repairer outside of the present network, and there's very little a manufacturer can

do about that. So, why not build a network of repairers who come to the manufacturer for help, and ensure the repaired vehicle is promoted as repaired by professionals – the collision repairer and the manufacturer?

Given turbulence ahead not only from international commerce and product complexity, manufacturers need to buddy up with reliable partners to ensure their business model does more than selling new vehicles.

For example, there's more – it's time the people running new vehicle showrooms are given a break too. The cost of running franchises has taken off like a scolded cat, yet the return on investment has definitely declined. The franchise owners need another way – not to abandon the business – but try to improve profitability.

Not all customers are happy to go to these oddly soulless grand buildings to go through a long, long process to buy the vehicle they knew they wanted before entering. This also applies to dealer servicing, where locations may make getting a vehicle serviced or repaired quite difficult on a normal working day. What better way to improve profitability than by partnering with collision repairers to offer localised servicing too?

The collision repairers have more business locations than retail outlets, especially in major cities. Not only are the locations inherently cheaper than the very best retail addresses, but for the public they are easier to reach. Once a customer has bought the vehicle, they want a great service or repair job at an affordable price. So, perhaps integrating manufacturer servicing as well as collision repair into collision repairers makes a lot of sense.



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WHAT'S HOT?

HERE TECHNOLOGIES AND BMW GROUP HAVE EXTENDED THEIR PARTNERSHIP



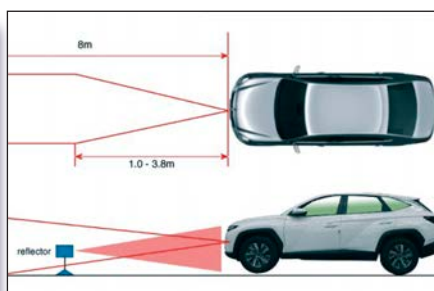
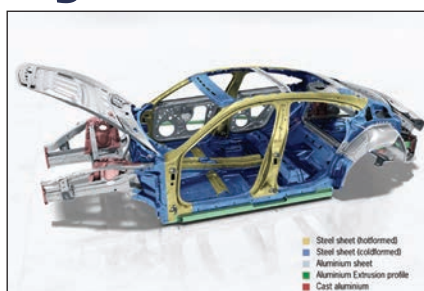
HERE Technologies and the BMW Group extend their partnership focused on improving the driving experience, road safety, and the delivery of software-defined vehicle (SDV) architecture.

New BMW models released from 2025 onwards will utilise a unified stack of standard

and high-definition map data from HERE to enable a range of driving functions, from lane-level positioning to ADAS and automated driving. The continuously updated HERE map supports BMW with its compliance with the European Union's Intelligent Speed Assistance regulation and helps the car maker to achieve top NCAP ratings.

All HERE data for the BMW Group, including lane-level models of the road network, will be powered by UniMap, HERE's AI-powered, unified mapping system. Designed to interplay with the vehicle sensors, UniMap enables the creation of a data flywheel leading to a continuously updated map and improved driving experiences.

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WHAT'S HOT?

AUTOMOTIVE REFINISH AND ADAS – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The automotive industry is rapidly advancing, with technology playing a critical role in ensuring safer driving experiences. One of the most critical innovations is advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), which include features like adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, collision avoidance and parking assistance – all of which rely on a network of sensors, cameras and radar.

When refinishing a vehicle equipped with ADAS, it's essential to understand how the process can impact these sensitive components. Let's explore some key considerations to ensure the vehicle's functionality and safety are preserved.

ADAS sensors are typically located in strategic areas of the vehicle, including:

- Front and rear bumpers (radar and ultrasonic sensors).
- Windshield and rearview mirrors (cameras and LiDAR).
- Side mirrors and fenders (blind-spot detection sensors).

Before painting, carefully identify these components. Walk around the vehicle and do an external visual inspection. You may notice, for example, a backup camera (mandated by the government on all vehicles 2018 or newer), ultrasonic sensors in the rear, ultrasonic sensors in the front, a forward-looking camera in the grille and/or a windshield-mounted camera for lane departure. You can look for indicators of a vehicle having ADAS systems on the dashboard, switches on the steering wheel or switches on the console. You can also scroll through the menu on the touch screen to view the vehicle's particular ADAS systems.

For vehicles undergoing bodywork or repair in addition to painting, consider the integration of ADAS systems into the repair process. Misaligned body panels or improperly installed components can compromise the accuracy and reliability of these systems. Follow OEM repair guidelines closely.

For example, if the car is equipped with radar, you must know where you can perform a repair and where you cannot. For example, in a radar area, there cannot be any body fillers, staples or any kind of repair that could scatter the signal.

Training and equipment

Collision repair shops must invest in specialised training and equipment to handle ADAS-equipped vehicles. Technicians should be well-versed in:

Sensor and camera handling

- Calibration procedures.
- Manufacturer-specific ADAS requirements

For example, a common misconception is that if you do not disconnect the camera while removing the windshield, you do not need to recalibrate. This is false thinking!

Referring to OEM repair guidelines and strictly following them without any variation is the best way to ensure a successful calibration.

Impact of paint thickness

The thickness of the paint can significantly affect the performance of ADAS sensors, particularly those relying on radar and LiDAR. Excessive paint layers can obstruct signals, leading to inaccurate readings or

system malfunctions. Adhering to manufacturer-recommended paint thickness is crucial to maintaining sensor accuracy.

Is total film build perhaps a problem or just the thickness of the basecoat? Total film build can create a problem. Metallic (aluminium) is probably the biggest factor when it comes to basecoat, but the total thickness of the basecoat, undercoats, sealers, and primers can create issues as well.

If you apply primer too thickly, it may inhibit the radar. It may also be that you applied too much clearcoat. This also could inhibit the ability of the radar to function correctly – not to mention fillers or staples in the repair area that could also cause a problem. Additionally, if the film build is too great, you can't just sand the backside of the bumper to lower some of the substrate thickness. The sand scratches must be completely level and uniform; otherwise, it also can scatter the radar signal.

Also, to avoid unintentional damage, sensors and cameras should be covered and shielded during the refinish process. Ensure that masking materials do not leave residue or obstruct the sensor's functionality post-refinish.

After painting, it is often necessary to recalibrate ADAS components to ensure their proper operation. For example, the removal of a bumper for paint will require a calibration.

Colour and reflectivity considerations

Some ADAS systems, especially those using cameras, are sensitive to colour and reflectivity. High-gloss or metallic finishes can create glare or distort images captured by cameras, while certain dark colours may reduce contrast and hinder system performance. Consult the OEM repair guidelines to understand colours compatible with ADAS functionality.

Is it only metallic colours that can cause a problem with radar, or can micas also cause a problem? The metallics are the refinishes that will most likely create a problem with radar sensors, but micas and film build could also have an effect. Also, there may be pigments on the market today that haven't been tested yet as to whether they affect radar or not, so it just may not be known. It could be any paint, not just metallics, that inhibit radar. It just depends on the manufacturer.

Summary

As ADAS technology becomes more prevalent, painting a car is no longer a simple aesthetic task but a process that requires careful consideration of advanced automotive electronics. By understanding the intricacies of ADAS and following manufacturer guidelines, collision repairers can ensure that the vehicle's functionality and safety are maintained while delivering a flawless finish.

Adapting to these technological advancements not only ensures customer satisfaction but also positions your business as a leader in the evolving automotive industry.

Make sure to check the vehicle manufacturer's repair procedures because they all vary. Also, you need to be upstream of these repairs and understand what ADAS is and if the vehicle has it before you start repairs. It starts in the front office and with the estimators.

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TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW

THE CORRECT WAY FOR GLASS FITMENT AND ADAS CALIBRATION

Deon Rossouw (left), Executive Director, is seen with glass expert Jacques Harmse, (centre), Head of Glass Operations and Andrew Brittoe, Automotive Glass Technician. They are at one of the specialised Autoboy's branches that cater for auto glass repair, replacement and ADAS calibrations. ADAS calibrations require a controlled environment with level floors, adequate lighting, sufficient, space and steady WiFi.

Ever more vehicles are now available in South Africa complete with a raft of Euro 5 level mandated ADAS camera packages.

Automotive Refinisher took time out to look at the complex procedure to eliminate post-accident repair faults with windscreen replacements and to keep pace with dynamic static calibration efforts. Autoboy's assisted in showing the correct way to fit and calibrate windscreens.

Having been on the receiving end of late of horrific stories about badly fitted windscreens and the complete neglect to reset or take

care of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) within the windscreen, it appears that this has become hazardous territory for repairers, as well as consumers and insurers.

The windscreen forms part of the structure of any vehicle and is a safety critical component of the car. If you don't use the correct glass, it weakens the structure and compromises safety for the occupants as well as pedestrians in the event of an accident. There appears to be very little management of this sector of repair, if any, at present.

Even with insurance approved fitment, there has been reports of highly questionable

practises by some outsourced fitment providers. One such story showed that the ADAS sensor had been glued into place on the new glass, and the service providers had painted black around it so no one would notice this. Warning lights showed up on the cluster straight away and these thankfully can't be cleared by diagnostics but must be recalibrated.

Most windscreens, if manufacturer supplied, already have sensors fitted and calibrated. It appears that the lack of training is very questionable indeed.

1



Remove windscreen beads. Primer process uses the correct two-pack bonding PU Henkel Teroson bond compliant application process for safety standards to be met on Euro 5 replacement standards.

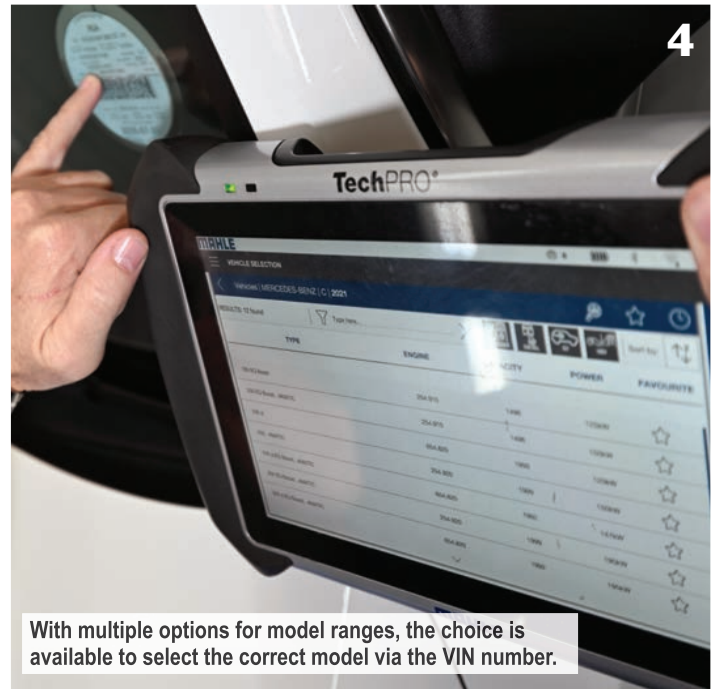
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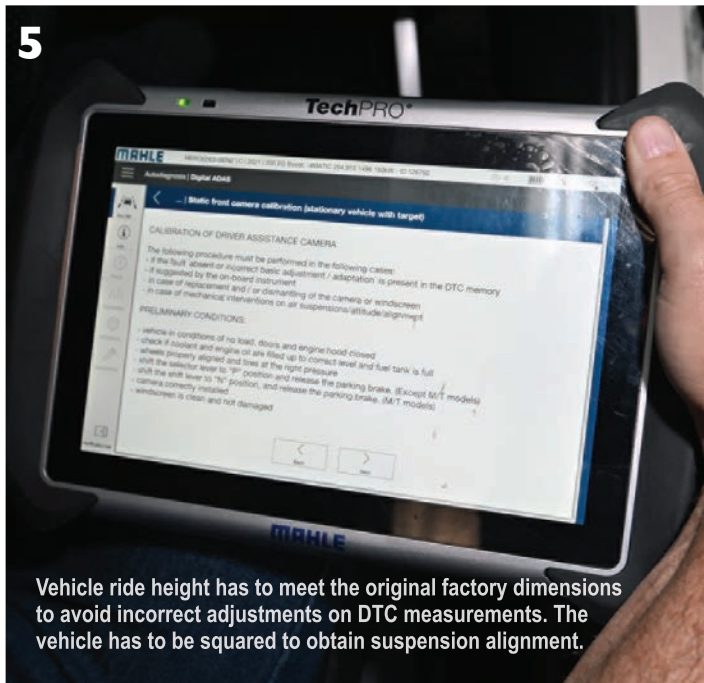
With the steering centered and the brake computer sender toggle in place, the vehicle is ready for the next stage to proceed. It is vital to have a level floor space to get ADAS right the first time.



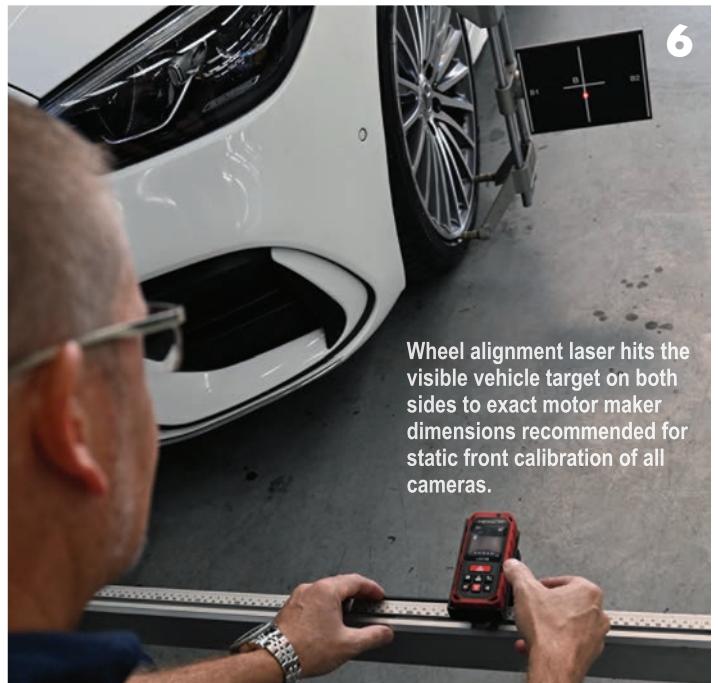
3 The TechPro selects all models from OEM VIN data to bring up the exact vehicle measurements that need fault rectification with a new windscreen in place.



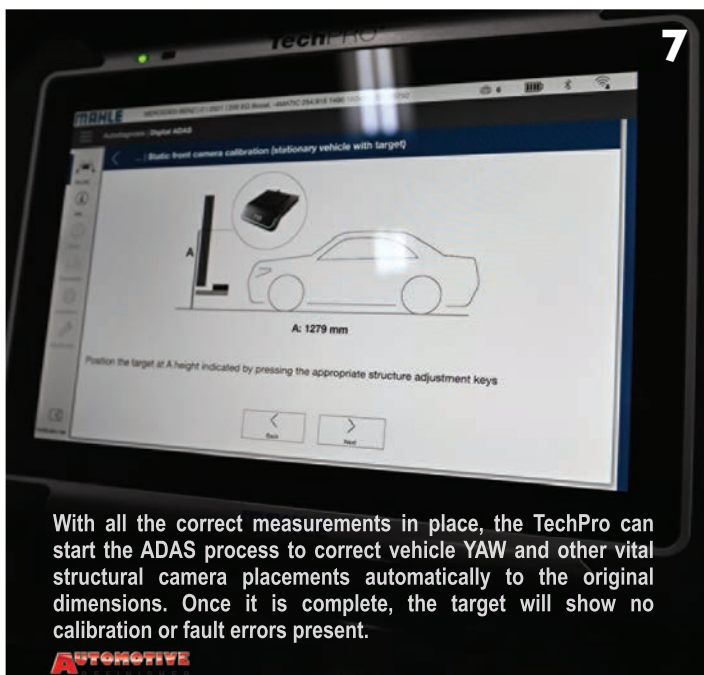
4 With multiple options for model ranges, the choice is available to select the correct model via the VIN number.



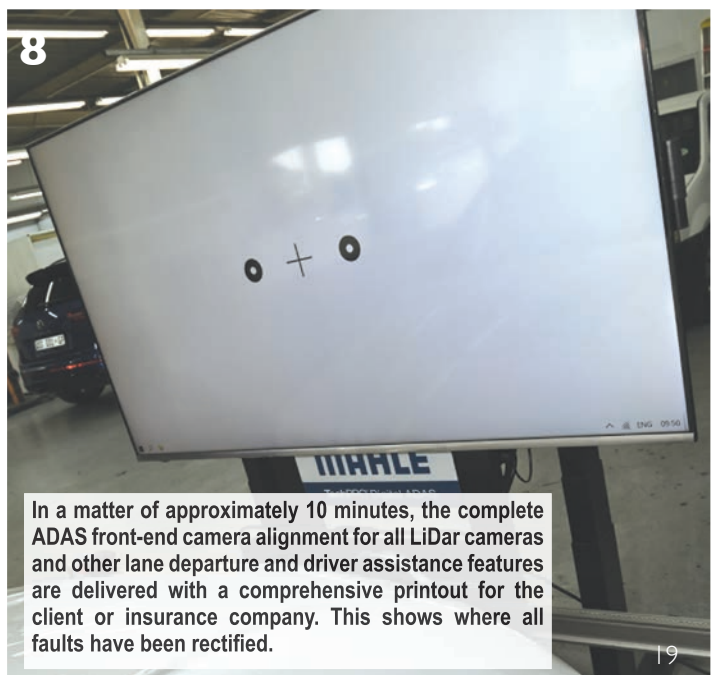
5 Vehicle ride height has to meet the original factory dimensions to avoid incorrect adjustments on DTC measurements. The vehicle has to be squared to obtain suspension alignment.



6 Wheel alignment laser hits the visible vehicle target on both sides to exact motor maker dimensions recommended for static front calibration of all cameras.



7 With all the correct measurements in place, the TechPro can start the ADAS process to correct vehicle YAW and other vital structural camera placements automatically to the original dimensions. Once it is complete, the target will show no calibration or fault errors present.



8 In a matter of approximately 10 minutes, the complete ADAS front-end camera alignment for all LiDar cameras and other lane departure and driver assistance features are delivered with a comprehensive printout for the client or insurance company. This shows where all faults have been rectified.



REFINISH PROFILE

DUXONE; WORLD'S BEST VALUE REFINISH LINE

Duxone is a complete and competitive refinish system, including a mixing machine and a comprehensive set of colour tools. Made in Western Europe, their products stand for consistent quality and good colour accuracy.

Duxone is simple and user-friendly and has a balanced range of tints and easy mixing ratios. Their product types cover every application from start to finish, so that you never have to worry about compatibility with alternative products.

Every colour is the result of an exact combination of multiple tints. So, to find the formula that accurately reproduces an existing coat, you need the proper tools. As part of Axalta Coating Systems, Duxone can provide professional and cost-effective colour tools. Together, the Duxone colour instruments unlock some 71 000 basecoat formulas and 34 000 2K formulas for both passenger and commercial vehicles.

Save valuable time and refinishing materials, by retrieving the right formula with Duxone colour tools.

Body shops who want to remain competitive need access to a device that does the hard work of colour-matching any vehicle's basecoat or 2K topcoat for them. Duxone have all the colour tools a repair shop will need to get the best out of the range.

The Acquire Colour Compact is a portable, easy-to-use digital spectrophotometer that comes with a straightforward built-in instruction manual, calibration set and charging station. Enjoy seamless connection to Axalta Colour Cloud. Combined with Duxone's traditional range of colour tools, the Acquire Colour Compact helps to ensure that body shops using Duxone can provide consistently good, and durable, refinish results.

Colour Room is the powerful cloud-based colour retrieval software from Duxone. Its advanced functions and compatibility with the Colour Detector spectrophotometer makes it a valuable resource for your body shop.

Once online, updates are immediate so you will always be able to access the latest formula and products at all times. With its

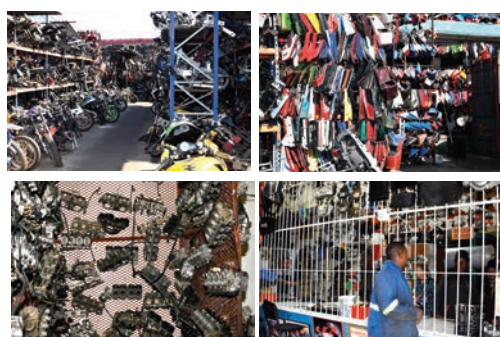
user-friendly interface it is fully accessible from any device, including tablets and smartphones.

The Duxone Variant Box is a comprehensive and accurate colour reference tool. It holds colour chips for European and Asian passenger car colours, with at least one variant per shade. Divided over 72 booklets, each leaf is sprayed with a single shade. Using the barcode or numeric code on the chip, you can instantly retrieve the corresponding formula.

To enable you to achieve the best possible result for every aspect of a car, Duxone also has a collection of 1 600 colour chips with tints used for bumpers and non-body car parts. When you have identified the matching colour, you can quickly retrieve the formula with the information on the chip.

The Duxone OEM Box adds value to body shops that require a visual representation of colours. The tool contains more than 4 900 stripe-coated OEM standard colours, assembled into swatches, and is updated once a year. Car makes are consolidated according to their group affiliation.

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Bodyshops interested in installing a Duxone paint mixing system or for more information contact Autoboy's on 010 44 44 88 5 or saleshub@autoboys.co.za.

www.autoboys.co.za

DUXONE.COM

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

VERMONT SALES OPEN DAY MARKS 40 YEARS OF SUCCESS



Vermont Sales hosted their Open Day with great success once again. The event coincided with the celebration of the company's 40th anniversary, and the packed Midrand Expo Centre was abuzz with around 2 000 invited guests and clients enjoying a vibrant atmosphere.

Attendees were treated to an immersive experience, getting up close with Vermont Sales' impressive portfolio of 30 world-class product lines. Among the highlights were Tork Craft tools, known for their reliability; OLFA knives from Japan, celebrated for their precision; ALPEN drill bits from Austria, prized for their durability; GAV pneumatics from Italy, offering cutting-edge air technology; and Festool from Germany, a favourite among professionals for its innovation.

AirCraft also showcased their newly introduced SG AC2000 HVLP gravity-feed spray guns, along with a complete pneumatic system range, including filters, gauges, hoses, spares, and more. Everything was effectively displayed for immediate orders, with knowledgeable staff on hand to answer questions and provide live demonstrations.

The event wasn't just a visual feast for craftsmen – it also

featured a buffet lunch for all visitors, adding a welcoming touch of hospitality to the already world-class affair. This thoughtful blend of innovation and customer care reflects Vermont Sales' longstanding ethos of being "Powered by Service."

"We salute everyone who has played a role in our success and raise a toast to the next 40 years of growth and achievement," said CEO Ryan Hunt. His words echo the company's forward-looking vision, built on a foundation of trust, reliability, and dedication.

Founded in 1985 by Roland and Mindi Hunt, Vermont Sales has grown from a modest family business into a major force in the South African tool industry. Today, it's led by the second generation – Angela Fox and Ryan Hunt – and distributes over 18 000 items through more than 3 000 outlets nationwide. Their products are trusted by tradespeople, DIYers, and craftsmen alike.

As Vermont Sales looks to the future, its unwavering commitment to quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction ensures that its remarkable journey is far from over. The 2025 anniversary celebration was more than just an event – it was a bold declaration of the company's enduring impact and a glimpse into the exciting chapters yet to unfold.



Company founders Roland and Mindi Hunt (left and centre) are seen with their son Ryan Hunt, CEO of Vermont Sales.



Live demonstrations on the day were enjoyed by show goers as some of the 18 000 line items were put to the test.



GAV HVLP spray gun.



AirCraft SG AC2000 Series.



Shawn van Zyl (left) brand manager for GAV and AirCraft is seen with Dale Engelbrecht, director at the air specialist stand.



Paolo Carolla and Claudia Zeff from Alpen in Austria, demonstrated their products and chatted to clients first hand.



Each person on hand made you feel part of the Vermont Sales family.



Cordless pop rivet guns make life a lot easier on the shop floor.



Vermont Sales hosted over 2 500 invited guests and clients over the three days of their Open Day in Midrand.

TRAINING

PIONEERING PRACTICAL, EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED TRAINING IN AUTO BODY REPAIR

As the South African skills development landscape shifts from SETA to QCTO accreditation, C3 Auto Body Repair Academy is taking a bold step by offering high-impact, non-accredited programmes that bridge urgent skill gaps in the auto body repair industry. These short courses are tailored for practical learning, immediate employment, and flexible career opportunities.

Hands-on learning that meets industry needs

Neo Motshabelo, Head of Operations, says C3's approach is rooted in practical, employment-driven training. Instead of waiting for lengthy accreditation processes, the academy focuses on what the industry needs now: skilled assistants ready to enter the workplace. Their programmes serve a wide range of stakeholders – from aspiring artisans to panel shops, insurers, and OEMs.

Two flagship courses – the Spray Painter Assistant and Auto Body Repairer Assistant programmes – are offered in partnership with Old Mutual Insure. Both run for a minimum of four months and follow a dual-phase structure:

In-House Training (2 months): Candidates learn workshop safety, tool handling, surface preparation, masking, paint correction, disassembly and reassembly, electronic measurement, and basic damage assessment.

Workplace Training (2 months): Hosted by active repair shops, candidates gain real-world experience in panel repair, detailing (including polishing, ceramic coating, and paint protection), and parts evaluation.

This blend ensures that trainees gain essential, in-demand skills while being exposed to professional environments from the outset.

Pathways beyond the workshop floor

What sets C3 apart is its multi-pathway career model. Instead of locking learners into one track, the academy empowers them to explore a range of roles after training, such as:

Employment: Graduates can join body shops as assistants, support insurance assessors, or become refinishing specialists.

Entrepreneurship: With hands-on experience, many are equipped to launch their own small businesses.

Alternative careers: Exposure to parts sales, assessor admin, and insurance-related services opens new opportunities beyond technical roles.

This flexibility helps candidates align their career paths with their individual strengths and interests.

Partnering with industry for real-world impact

"C3's success formula is strong collaboration with accredited Motor Body Repairers (MBRs) for workplace placements," says Busi Maile, C3 MD. "These partnerships allow trainees to work on vehicle restorations, providing added capacity to workshops while exposing students to elite repair standards."

Shops benefit from:

- Extra hands-on detailing and restoration prep.
- Early access to trained candidates.
- Opportunities to shape future talent pipelines.

Some partners also contribute vehicles for training, offering students hands-on practice under the supervision of qualified tradespeople.

Leading a skills revolution

C3 Auto Body Repair Academy is setting a new standard for industry-responsive training. By delivering fast-tracked, hands-on, non-accredited programmes, they're helping South Africa build a skilled workforce that meets today's demands and tomorrow's possibilities.

With industry backing and a learner-focused model, C3 is transforming how auto body training is done – offering more than just skills, but real opportunity. Contact them at www.c3academy.co.za.



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The Axalta Technical Team at the Training Centre in Midrand, from left to right: Keith Brierly, Technical Specialist, Christopher Gary, Technical Sales Support and Paul Retief, Technical Specialist and Head Trainer.



NEW REFINISH SYSTEM

STANDOX FAST CURE LOW ENERGY REFINISH DELIVERS REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS SPEED

Axalta announced the launch of its next generation patented Fast Cure Low Energy System (FCLE) clearcoat and surfacer products. FCLE technology provides exceptional refinish quality with increased productivity which results in higher profits for body shops as well as potentially reducing energy consumption during drying. Axalta delivers the FCLE System through its leading high-end refinish brand Standox – Xtreme System.

New clearcoat

The new clearcoat is easy to use as it does not require basecoat activation making application quicker and easier. It has a robust, scratch- and chemical-resistant finish with increased durability to meet OEM specifications, which provides body shops with even more opportunities to use the FCLE System, including OEM warranty repairs. The mixing ratio and application for the new clearcoat is identical to the previous FCLE System clearcoat but does not require a flexible additive for plastic parts. With short low-temperature baking and air-dry capabilities, the next generation clearcoat may further reduce body shops' carbon footprint while contributing to higher throughput.

New surfacer

The next generation surfacer not only maintains the high-productivity and excellent performance of previous FCLE surfacers but also reduces complexity for body shops by combining sanding and non-sanding options in one product. Refinishers no longer have to choose between a sanding or a wet-on-wet product. This has the added benefit of body shops carrying less stock, which simplifies both the ordering and the application process.

"Our next generation products and our new FCLE System build on the success of their predecessors. The improved FCLE System delivers all the benefits refinishers have come to expect, and more, including saving up to 50% of gas and up to 48% on electricity because of low bake or air drying. The new FCLE System lets body shops find the perfect balance between speed and low energy consumption without compromising appearance," says Bart De Groof, Sr. Director Marketing, Global Refinish at Axalta.

For more information about Axalta Refinish, visit their website: refinish.axalta.eu/fcle



30 Mins: Standoblue surfacer application air dries in 30 minutes. It delivers a wet-in-wet compatible performance.



20 Mins: Standoblue waterborne basecoat is sprayed with one and a half coats and can be flashed-off within 15 minutes.



35 Mins: Standocryl 9600 VOC applied with one and half coats with wet-on-wet application which is hard dried in just 20 minutes at 20°C.



Polishing can be carried out if desired in under one hour total process time. This delivers an improved production boost on process repair times.

APPLICATION FOR STANDOX FAST CURE LOW ENERGY (FCLE) SYSTEM



1 Low energy fast cure process starts with the special U3000 Express wipe which is based on special acid chemistry. They are ready for use to complete a successful metal pre-treatment to provide both corrosion resistance and improved adhesion for the subsequent paint process.



2 The revolutionary U7600 VOC Extreme Filler can be applied wet-on-wet. In one and half to four full coats for a single spray process it will improve efficiency. It has excellent adhesion on plastic parts at 25°C and can be sanded with 600 abrasive after a 15 minute flash off. It also delivers a super smooth flow out.



3 Standoblue Fast Cure Low Efficiency refinish system can be express dried in its basecoat stage with hot air drying or Infra Red (IR) curing lamps for improved express drying if necessary. It is also available in shades of white, grey and black in high solid primers.



4 Standox Standoblue waterborne basecoat delivers excellent coverage with outstanding colour accuracy. With just one and half spray visits, it is ideal for blending repairs. It must always be properly stirred for optimised performance. It can be applied wet-on-wet to increase speed in your paint shop.



5 Standocryl 9600 VOC extreme plus cures at low temperatures of 20°C with a through-dry hardness in approximately 20 to 35 minutes. It is also low bake compatible with speeds of 10 to 15 minutes drying time. Delivering a total start to finish time of just 45 minutes to boost repair times with amazing hard drying characteristics. The Standocryl dries with an amazing wet-look final finish in record breaking time with the system's revolutionary performance in your body shop.



6 If necessary, polishing is possible within an hour of air dry at 20°C. The overall wet-look finish is good to go as it achieves an amazing high speed performance for your body shop without compromising on quality.

OPINION

UNFAIR PLAYING FIELDS FOR SA CONTINUES IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

by Justin Swanepoel, Real Research

I have been reading a surge of articles relating to the Trump tariffs and how the local vehicle manufacturers and local vehicle component suppliers (let's call them the OEM) are going to struggle and how even local production will be affected. I have worked closely with the automotive industry for many years and can tell you right now, the OEMs are all already in trouble, and it isn't the new tariffs that has suddenly caused this pain.

It can be broken down into a handful of outdated and unfair government systems that are potentially de-industrialising the local OEM value chain, throwing money down the drain and creating an unequal playing field.

Let's start with some sobering numbers over the past few years:

- The volume of locally manufactured vehicles has decreased by 6.5% and dropping.
- The volume of Chinese, Indian and Japan (let's call them Asian) imported brands have increased by 650% and rising.
- The local components volume to local OEM has decreased to below 40% of the vehicle costs and dropping.
- From a sales market share perspective, Asian imported vehicles are sitting around 59% and locally produced vehicles at 41%, and this gap will only widen.

Do not get me wrong here. Competition is good and I am loving the surge of Asian imports as it gives the customer a wider choice. These Asian vehicles are very competitively priced, come fully teched up and some are downright awesome in looks and drive. The local OEMs are now sitting with their backs against the wall and with one hand tied behind their backs. Why is the one hand tied? Well let's take a deeper look into some government systems that are in place to "assist the OEM".

Remember, the OEMs build the factories, create the component supply chain, produce the parts, train the people, transfer tech skills, employ the people, etc. And I am not even going to talk about Eskom, rail, road, strikes, port and clearance problems in their manufacture and RTM processes.

SAAM 2035 (South African Automotive Master Plan)

SAAM 2035 is a government system in place with the over-reaching goal of making the South African automotive industry more competitive on a global scale. This master plan comes with six key objectives, which the local OEM must strictly adhere to (but not any Asian brands).

1. Grow South African vehicle production from 0.6% to 1% of global production by 2035. (Dropping fast).
2. Increase local content in South African manufactured vehicles to 60% of vehicle costs. (40% only and dropping).
3. Double automotive employment in the supply chain. 120k currently employed. (Multiple OEM and Dealer warnings in the market regarding downsizing).
4. Improve automotive industry competition levels to that of leading international competitors. (How do you compete with one hand tied behind your back?)
5. Transformation of the South African automotive value chain. Must have 25% black-owned component suppliers for the manufacturer. (Yip, let's rather pay R500 for a small part that costs R50 = true story).



6. Deepen value-addition within the value chain with growth in R&D, technology, and skills. (How do you grow R&D and tech skills if Asian vehicles are landing ready to drive?)

AITF (The Automotive Industry Transformation Fund). The AITF was established as a collective Equity Equivalent Investment Programme (EEIP), as defined in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Codes, between the OEMs in South Africa. (Local OEM contribute financially, but not Asian brands).

1. The AITF is in place to support black participation in the automotive industry supply chain. (Only 68 companies were created, some as small as having just five staff).

2. To facilitate transformation and the access to developmental funding, access to market, and access to capacity development for qualifying black-owned entities. (Why not assist the entire value chain?)

3. The AITF plays a key role in the implementation of the SAAM 2035 objectives, especially in terms of local content and industry value chain transformation. (Yip, here comes that R500 part again).

4. With R2.2 billion in AITF funding and R3.7 billion of market access and procurement assistance, and local OEM are in for a combined R6 billion before even selling a vehicle. (Seems unfair to me)

AIS (Automotive Incentive Scheme)

The AIS is a decent system in theory, and is an incentive designed to grow and develop the automotive sector through investment in new and replacement models and components that will increase local OEM production volumes, sustain employment, and strengthen the automotive value chain if at least two of the following economic requirements are met:

1. Tooling, research, and development in South Africa. (Again, how does this apply when Asian vehicles land fully built?)

2. Employment creation and empowerment. (I am fully behind creating employment for everybody in the value chain).

So, let's get real here.

Government systems and red tape are making life very difficult to attract and retain local automotive investment, create more automotive employment and build the automotive industry for the local manufacturers and component suppliers. The Asian brands have the luxury of no factory, no assembly, no logistics, no supplier restrictions, no BBBEE, no localisation of parts and services, no funds towards transformation, no unrealistic government targets etc. They need a logistics or franchise partner to bolt onto, a couple of admin, sales and service staff, some high-level training and maybe a warehouse to hold some parts that are not even made locally.

And don't mention all that RA-RA about Asian brands building manufacturing factories and using local component suppliers. The BAIC factory was meant to employ 1700 staff, create a local component supply chain and build 60 000 vehicles per year; but have only produced 300 vehicles in six years.

In my humble opinion and without prejudice, the word I am looking for is: Unfair!

**WHAT'S HOT?**

70% OF UK TECHNICIANS CONSIDER QUITTING

A new survey by Autotech Recruit has revealed that seven out of ten UK vehicle technicians are considering leaving their jobs. The survey polled technicians across the UK aged 18 to 54, with 32% working at dealerships and 26% at independent repairers and garages. It was carried out to better understand what matters to technicians in order to help businesses improve retention rates and tackle the skills crisis. It found that 70% of respondents admitted they are considering leaving their current employment. Reasons ranged from seeking external opportunities to starting their own independent businesses or leaving the industry altogether. Meanwhile, nearly 79% of respondents rated working hours as "very important", surpassing even salary, highlighting the growing emphasis on work-life balance within the automotive workforce. Flexibility, no weekend work, and holiday allowances also ranked in the top five of important factors.

James Mackay, sales director for Autotech Recruit and Autotech Academy, said: "The survey findings emphasise a critical challenge for the automotive industry. It's clear that the sector needs to adapt to the evolving priorities of its workforce. Work-life balance, flexibility, and career progression are no longer optional – they are essential."

The survey also found that 75% of employees under 25 focus on new skills and career progression while financial rewards matter more to those over 25. Mackay said: "Younger technicians are a driving force for industry innovation. However, their frustration with the lack of opportunities is a wake-up call for employers. Without clear paths for growth, we risk losing their potential to other sectors."

FUN FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

The World Record Of The Highest Vehicle Mileage Is 3 039 122 miles, that is 4890992.755968 kilometres, Irvin Gordon was able to put just over 3 million miles on his 1966 Volvo 1800S back in 2014. That is almost the same distance as 120 trips around the earth! His secret? The world may never know! All we can suggest to keep your car healthy and able to tack on the miles is to maintain a regular maintenance schedule.

However, you want to have low mileage on your vehicle unless you are attempting to break the world record.



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TRAINING

NEW PPG TRAINING FACILITIES OPEN IN CAPE TOWN AND KZN

PPG are thrilled to announce an exciting development in the world of automotive refinishing – the grand opening of the state-of-the-art ABS Balco PPG Training Facility in Cape Town, South Africa. This cutting-edge facility, fully equipped with the latest technology from PPG, the world leader in coating systems, stands as a testament to innovation and commitment.

Nestled amidst the vibrant coastal landscapes, this training centre offers unparalleled access to advanced digital technology and equipment designed to elevate the skills and craftsmanship of refinishing professionals.

A partnership with deep roots

This remarkable venture signals the deep-rooted collaboration between PPG and ABS Balco. Spanning over three decades, their journey together has consistently been aimed at delivering the finest service and attention to all their customers. This new facility marks another milestone in their shared commitment to excellence and innovation.

What awaits you at the new facility?

The ABS Balco PPG Training Facility is a beacon of opportunity tailored for coastal customers. The curriculum features exclusive training and demonstrations on PPG's revolutionary systems, including the Moonwalk, PPG LINQ Colour, VisualizID and Magic Box.

These cutting-edge solutions epitomise efficiency, precision, and creativity – essential ingredients for mastering modern refinishing techniques.

Every session is designed to empower participants with hands-on experiences, bridging the gap between traditional methods and technological advancements. Whether you're looking to refine your skills or explore new horizons in automotive beauty, the facility stands ready to inspire and educate.

Why choose us?

At the heart of this grand opening lies their unwavering dedication to advancing the refinishing industry. By choosing to train with them, you are not only upgrading your skills but also becoming a part of a legacy of excellence championed by both PPG and ABS Balco.

They have further expanded their

training reach and capacity with the opening of a PPG training facility in Durban. The set-up was completed within the Empower Autobody premises who serves as a Panel & Paint corporation as well as a training facility for the automotive industry. A state-of-the-art theory and practical centre offering various modules for KZN and surrounding regions.

The PPG Longmeadow training centre in Edenvale, Johannesburg, continues to operate as the national training facility to all customers. The focus remains on creating a positive impact and skills development to all trainees. The best training sessions are now at your doorstep.

Book your session

Booking your training or demonstration session is as simple as reaching out to your ABS, Balco, or PPG representatives in the regions. Let them equip you with the knowledge and skills to lead the charge in automotive refinishing excellence.

All OEM training will now be provided on your doorstep with dedicated dates as per the PPG Training Calendar 2025.



Demonstrations at the Cape Town facility on PPG's revolutionary systems, include the Moonwalk, PPG LINQ Color, VisualizID and Magic Box.



A comfortable lounge area for students to enjoy during their training.



The theory room at the new Cape Town training facility.



The Cape Town facility has all the bells and whistles to educate and inspire.

TRAINING FACILITIES IN KZN AND JOHANNESBURG



The Longmeadow training facility's Moonwalk section in Johannesburg.



The KZN training set-up was completed within the Empower Autobody premises in Durban.



Training is received for all PPG systems at the KZN Training Centre.



PPG Envirobase® High Performance.



The colourful and inviting theory room in KZN.

The new Mini Cooper S builds on the brand's legendary go-kart-like driving dynamics, combining thrilling performance, sharp handling and delivering a fun and engaging driving experience that only a Mini can. Now even more technologically savvy and sophisticated, the new Cooper S makes the A to B just that much more fun thanks to its nimble size and power to weight ratio. The brand continues to offer a distinctive sporty alternative to traditional compact cars.

The Cooper S features a 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine producing 189 horsepower and 280 Nm of torque, providing excellent acceleration and immediate throttle response at speed, making it great for both city driving and spirited cornering. Power is delivered to tarmac via a seven speed automatic gearbox and it is quick with 0-100km in just 6.6 seconds! However we did find the lack of paddle shifts alongside the steering wheel hampered the level of performance compared to previous editions. The true magic, however, lies in the Cooper S handling thanks to its small footprint, low centre of gravity, and precise steering. The Cooper S feels remarkably connected to the road at all times. Whether navigating tight urban streets or tackling winding country roads, the car's suspension setup and steering is designed to keep you engaged.

The new Cooper S comes with multiple driving modes, including a dedicated Go Kart mode, which sharpens the throttle response, stiffens the suspension, and enhances the steering feel. This mode further accentuates the Mini's go-kart qualities, making the car even

more eager with exhaust notes to match. In contrast, the Comfort mode softens the suspension for a more relaxed, everyday drive, perfect for cruising or longer journeys where a smoother ride is preferred. We were particularly impressed with the level of comfort you get in the new Mini compared to its predecessors, thanks to enhanced suspension dampening. For those looking to maximise fuel efficiency, there is also a Green mode which optimises the engine and other systems.

The Mini Cooper S retains the classic styling cues that have made it an iconic vehicle over the years, while also introducing modern touches. Union Jack tail-lights, and sleek lines give the car a youthful and energetic look. The car is available in a range of vibrant colors and trims, allowing for plenty of customisation.

Inside, the Mini Cooper S mixes sporty appeal with modern luxury, the interior comprises of a mix of materials which was interesting to see and gives the cabin a youthful appeal. At the centre of the interior is a large round 8.8-inch touchscreen infotainment system that integrates with Mini's latest software, offering Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and Bluetooth connectivity. The one thing I did miss were dedicated buttons for certain more menial tasks, which meant you needed to navigate the software instead.

Prices start at R595 000 for the Mini Cooper 3-Door Hatch, the 5-Door Hatch at R617 000 and the SE 3-Door Hatch at R802 000.

With super quick acceleration and agile handling, the new Cooper S adds another dimension to its fun-to-drive personality.



DRIVEN

MINI COOPER S POCKET ROCKET

HURRICANE *EQUIPMENT*



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WHAT'S HOT?

BODY SHOP SUSTAINABILITY TRENDS FOR 2025

Industry reports find that the automotive refinish industry, is projected to grow from \$12.43 billion in 2024 to \$19.25 billion by 2031, is seeing a strong shift toward sustainable practises. Sustainability and productivity are closely linked in this evolving landscape, as efforts to minimise environmental impact often drive operational improvements. Reflecting this trend, major players increasingly focus on low volatile organic compounds (VOC) and waterborne coatings to meet regulatory pressures and consumer demand for more sustainable solutions.

For body shops, the sustainability journey is a matter of competitiveness and operational improvement. Here's a look at how collision repair facilities can begin integrating sustainable practices – from energy efficiency and emissions tracking to waste reduction – to enhance their productivity, workplace, and environmental footprint.

New environmental requirements

In the years ahead, body shops will face increased expectations for environmental accountability – and not all of these requirements are driven by regulation. In recent years, players in all industrial ecosystems have developed sustainability goals and are working with their value chain partners to address those goals. The automotive refinish industry is not insulated from these influences up and down the value chain. Corporations with multinational operations that adhere to ambitious sustainability goals drive this shift across the regions in which they operate. European regulations, for example, often lead the way with stringent environmental and reporting standards that many companies adopt globally to streamline compliance, thereby creating a cascading effect on their customers and suppliers globally. For North American body shops, regardless of local laws, there's an industry-wide trend toward greater transparency in emissions reporting and environmental impact.

Let's address two primary factors that drive this trend: the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) and collision centre consolidation. SBTi, a collaboration that helps companies and financial institutions set science-based targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, is gaining traction, with more than 9 000 companies committing to reduce their emissions. The initiative develops standards, tools and guidance that allow companies to set scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. As a part of scope 3 downstream emissions reduction initiatives, paint manufacturers are increasingly collaborating with customers, including body shops, to lower emissions through product innovation and process improvement solutions.

Collision centre consolidation is ongoing, leading to shifts in the industry ownership structure. Stakeholders demand stronger sustainability practises from these corporate-owned repair facilities. As part of larger corporate entities, body shops are more likely to be asked for emissions reporting and impact metrics as part of these companies' sustainability commitments. Whether mandated by regulation or corporate policy, body shops will increasingly be expected to meet new sustainability benchmarks to compete.

Another factor to note is insurers. Most large insurance companies have ambitious sustainability goals, including emissions attributable to the assets they own or underwrite. In addition to their current repair assessment and evaluation criteria, they're expected to add sustainability metrics like emissions per repair. For instance, some large insurance players in Europe already demand

emissions metrics as part of repair estimates. Body shops with a greater understanding of vehicle repair sustainability parameters will have a competitive advantage in winning more business.

Productivity, efficiency, and life cycle impacts

By focusing on productivity, body shops reduce their environmental footprint and realise efficiencies that can directly impact the bottom line. Take, for example, life cycle assessment (LCA), a method used to calculate the environmental impact of a product from the beginning of its life (material sourcing and production) to its end (application and disposal). For body shops, understanding the full life cycle impact of their processes can help identify opportunities to reduce energy consumption, waste, and emissions at every step. From minimising paint overspray to using more efficient curing methods, these adjustments can help shops use fewer resources while lowering costs.

Innovations in digital colour-matching tools and automated paint-mixing systems can help enhance accuracy, reduce material waste, and improve operational efficiency.

Health, safety and attracting talent

The automotive refinish industry is contending with an ongoing shortage of skilled workers for body shops and needs to compete with other sectors to attract and retain a motivated talent pool.

Workspace environment can play a significant role in employee satisfaction and productivity. Clean, efficient, and well-ventilated workspaces remain essential for making body shops safer and more attractive workplaces. For example, evolving California regulations push for lower VOC emissions to reduce environmental impact and protect employee health. Adopting low-VOC or waterborne coatings and using efficient air filtration systems can foster a safer and more comfortable work environment.

Innovation continues to transform collision repair, paving the way for smarter, more efficient workflows. Instead of bulky computer systems, compact devices, such as virtual assistants in the mixing room, offer a clutter-free workplace. The virtual assistant's advanced environmental sensors help ensure optimal paint mixing, saving technicians 83 hours annually and creating a more comfortable work environment to help attract skilled talent.

Also, the innovation helps body shops become more sustainable by reducing energy consumption by 500 kilowatts annually without a large computer running daily. By integrating these practices, body shops can position themselves as appealing workplaces in a competitive labour market.

A path toward sustainable solutions

The growing emphasis on sustainability, operational efficiency and workforce well-being presents challenges and opportunities for body shops. Adapting to these demands requires solutions that balance compliance, productivity, and environmental impact.

Practical steps like adopting low-VOC coatings, improving energy efficiency, and using automated tools such as automated paint-mixing systems can help shops reduce waste and operating costs while meeting sustainability benchmarks. These changes can enhance processes and create safer, more attractive workplaces, helping body shops retain skilled technicians and appeal to new talent.

By integrating sustainability practises and innovative technologies, body shops can enhance productivity, reduce their environmental footprint and position themselves for long-term success in an increasingly competitive industry.

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WHAT'S HOT? SPRAYBOOTH MAINTENANCE – TIME TO GET WITH THE PROGRAMME

Spraybooths are a critical part in the repair process. As traffic volumes and, in turn, vehicle incidents make a return to pre-pandemic levels, body shops are seeing a rise in vehicle going through their equipment. Therefore, it is important to ensure that spraybooths are well looked after. Body shops could be forgiven for dropping the ball on preventative maintenance over the past two years, but those body shops would be wise to get back on it as soon as possible.

In-house maintenance can reduce the chances of equipment breaking down while also keeping costs to a minimum. A clear daily, weekly, and monthly check list for maintenance can help save on running costs and downtime significantly; with the most important thing being an extract filter replacement programme.

The most common issue found with spraybooths is in relation to extract filter condition. When body shops are busy, they want to paint cars not change filters, but it's hugely counter-productive to allow filters to run past their working life of approximately 900 hours and even worse to take the quick fix in peeling them back to allow the airflow to run more efficiently. This passes overspray directly into the air handling plant which over time can cost thousands in breakdown and remedial costs, as well as loss of production for unscheduled downtime.

Regular servicing while ensuring the correct filter specification is being used is absolutely paramount to spraybooth longevity. This is important not only remain compliant, but also for the overall airflow and the protection of vital mechanical parts such as the fans inside the air handling plants. Beware of cheap imitations as this is a false economy; for example, a choked burner or

blocked fan will cost more to run, take longer to achieve the desired results and untimely cost dearly if it fails and must be replaced – not to mention the added headache of downtime.

The latest technology in spraybooth consumables has come in the filter market. Over the past five years a newly developed type of PolyMat filter – a single stage synthetic product made from mostly recycled fibres is here. The opportunity to move away from the glass fibre product most shops have been familiar with for decades is that this product has no technical advantages and being irritable to skin created a resistance for painters to keep on top of necessary maintenance – its only benefit being that it is cheap. There has been a lot of success in converting customers to this newer technology and as glass fibre is incredibly energy intensive in the manufacturing process the costs of that product are significantly increased meaning the main barrier to change is narrowing. Net spend on extraction filters annually is actually cheaper using PolyMat and you gain extra productive time not changing floor filters as frequently. Not to mention the reduction in waste disposal costs, as less product used means less bulky waste to put in the skip.

To help maintain a spraybooth to a high standard, it's also important to keep on top of contaminants such as paint overspray, most of which accumulates under the floor grids in a typical downdraft spraybooth. This area needs to be regularly cleared, as build up can cause restrictions in airflow, as well as being a fire risk. Don't forget to also check around areas where air can escape through poorly maintained door seals, ducting, and gaps in panels, or if any insulation is missing in heat recovery systems. Top tip: a fog

clearance test from a service professional will indicate any areas of concern as well as providing a good visual method as to how well the spraybooth is performing.

Other housekeeping includes items such as door glass, cabin walls and light covers – all of which should be kept clean to maintain good illumination and, in turn, a right-first-time working environment. Investing in motor inverters is also a great way of managing electrical power and heating balance in perfect harmony by controlling fan speed. There are many points during the refinishing cycle where maximum fan speed is simply not beneficial. This will also significantly improve the longevity of mechanical components including the running gear, as they are not continually operating at full whack. Think of it as revving your car's engine when stationary, it's simply deemed wasteful and poor for the environment.

Service providers

When looking for a spraybooth maintenance provider there are many important factors to consider other than simply the cost of a service. Loss of production when a spraybooth breaks down far outweighs any other cost so make sure you ask your service provider about response times and costs for call outs. Other things to consider when looking to appoint a spraybooth service provider include:

Where are they located and what area do they cover?

Are they dependent on sub-contractors?

What stock of parts do they carry in their engineers' vans and at their head office?

Being able to respond within 24-48 hours with a skilled engineering team carrying an extensive range of common spare parts could save hundreds if not thousands in lost revenue to a body shop.

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Find out more at sherwin-automotive.com

REVOLUTIONISING COLOUR MIXING - THE AUTOMATED COLLISION CORE PRONTO

Sherwin-Williams, a global leader in automotive paint refinishing, announces the launch of the transformative Collision Core Pronto, an automated paint dispenser that helps the refinish industry adapt and thrive in a world of rising costs and skilled labour shortages. Keeping repairers one step ahead, the system is being described as a “game-changer” by industry users.

Collision Core Pronto from Sherwin-Williams offers body shops and de-fleet and remarketing centres greater speed and efficiency, as well as guaranteed colour precision and a fully automated, simple-to-operate process. The launch is the latest addition to a portfolio of innovative solutions offered by Sherwin-Williams to help automotive refinish customers address today's tough business challenges.

Collision Core Pronto changes the game on everything from automation, mixing time and precision to product waste, versatility and maintenance. It is available with four or six dispensing heads, giving flexibility for all automotive refinish customers operating in high-volume or high-labour cost environments.

“At Sherwin-Williams, we strive for innovation, continuous improvement and going one step beyond to support customers in everything we do, so we are delighted to introduce the European-manufactured Collision Core Pronto to EMEA,” says Dave Wright, Vice President of Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes for Europe, the Middle East, Africa and India (EMEA). “We want to help our customers overcome business challenges, and we believe Pronto is a true gamechanger in streamlining automotive repair and helping body shops to run more efficiently and profitably.”

A FEW KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS (BASED ON THE FOUR-HEAD MODEL) INCLUDE:

- ✓ **Nearly 200 colours per day:** With four high-tech dispensing heads, Pronto can mix up to four colours at the same time. Pronto is the first solution to offer concurrent multiple mixes. This adds up to an astonishing 192 different colours a day.
- ✓ **Fully automated solution:** Pronto is a user-friendly plug-and-play solution that requires no manual mixing, cleaning or calibration and can be operated by anyone. This frees up skilled technicians to focus on application and repairs.
- ✓ **Fast mixing time:** Initial users have demonstrated a total mix time of five minutes - 50% quicker than alternative mixing systems. That's time savings that makes a huge difference in busy operations.
- ✓ **Saves up to 50% in labour time:** The four-head machine can process 24 mixes an hour, significantly increasing body shop productivity.
- ✓ **Colour precision every time, with reduced product waste:** Fully integrated with Colour Retrieval Systems by Sherwin-Williams, Pronto's patented dispensing technology allows for extreme precision down to 0.01 g. And with no dripping or risk of overpouring, it ensures minimal product waste and fewer errors in colour formulation - critical precision for body shops where colour matching needs to be perfect every time.
- ✓ **Perfect for all job sizes:** Pronto can dispense as little as 50 g accurately, amounts impossible to achieve with a manual process.
- ✓ **Low maintenance:** Pronto features full product recirculation that eliminates the risk of clogging and ensures consistent, error-free operation. This fully automated recirculation system substantially reduces maintenance-related downtime, letting shops focus on their core tasks.

Customers who have trialled Pronto across Europe are reporting amazing results, with the machine increasing outputs and enabling them to give customers quality results the first time, every time.

“The paint dispenser from Sherwin-Williams has transformed how we operate day to day,” explains Adail Abbas, owner of TCR Supplies in the UK “It allows us to minimise paint mistakes with its perfect accuracy and to maximise time to do more with its automation and multiple dispensing at one time. We were very proud to be the first in the UK to have the dispenser; we had seen others before but nothing of this calibre. We are extremely happy with the results and delighted to have partnered with Sherwin-Williams. Personally, I love the fact I can load four to five mixes on the belt and walk away to pick orders, and by the time I'm back the paints are ready. It's a very simple and user-friendly process.”

Collision Core Pronto is available exclusively through Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes division.

WHAT'S HOT?

FADE-OUT AND POLISHING WITH STANDOCRYL VOC PERFORMANCE PRO CLEAR K9590

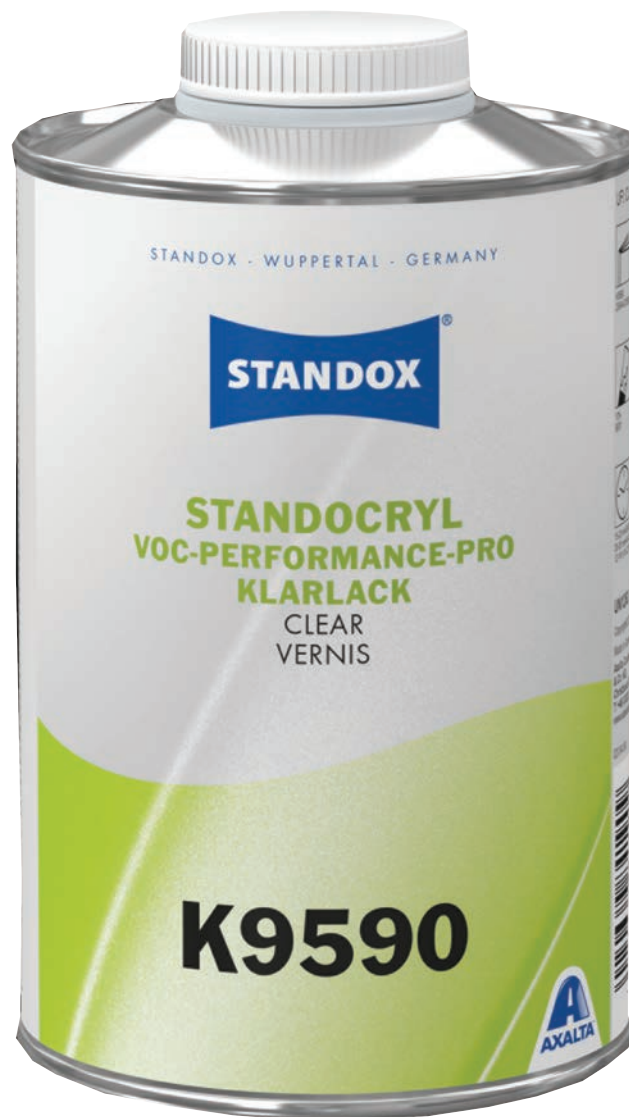
Standox, one of the global refinish coating brands of Axalta, helps refinishers with process demonstrations for fading out and polishing when using Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 in a Standovision training video. Available on the Stando website this video is designed to help refinishers achieve the best quality results, the first time, every time.

Harald Klöckner, Axalta International Training Leader and Refinish Product Specialist for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, says, "Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 is fast, easy-to-use and has been achieving excellent results for our body shops since it was launched in 2018. Our clearcoat technology delivers easy, quick, reliable, and flexible benefits but requires a slightly different process for fading out and spot repairs."

For a first-class fade-out, Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 should be used in conjunction with a fade-out thinner such as Standox Performance Blend 5730, which is available in a tin and an aerosol. "When sanding, it is important to graduate the sanding edge into the polished area of the part with a lighter sand, to ensure a smooth transition. This is critical when it comes to the application of the clear," says Klöckner.

Refinishers should complete one pass of Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 over the repair area, flash-off, and then extend the application of the second coat into the area that was more finely sanded. Standox Performance Blend 5730 fade-out thinner should then be applied to the polished zone.

Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 offers good flow, a high gloss finish and, thanks to the low spray viscosity, it can be easily applied in two spray passes with just a short flash-off time. The flexibility of Standocryl VOC Performance Pro Clear K9590 means it



can be adapted to any body shop's individual operating procedures, whether they want to focus on lower operational energy costs, or fast processes.

To find out more about how to achieve high quality finishes while maintaining efficiency, the full video can be viewed via our website, or for more information about the brand, please visit www.standox.co.za

UK NEWS

NEW SURVEY REVEALS IMPOSSIBLE EV PRODUCTION TARGETS

A recent survey by ABB Robotics highlights concerns about the feasibility of electric vehicle (EV) production targets for 2030 to 2040. The third Automotive Manufacturing Outlook Survey, conducted with Automotive Manufacturing Solutions, revealed that 31% of respondents believe these targets are unrealistic, up from 27% in the previous survey. Key factors behind this skepticism include waning consumer demand and a lack of infrastructure.

40

Despite these concerns, the survey indicates optimism for short-term growth. Seventy-five percent of respondents expect EV production to rise in 2025, with 31% forecasting an increase of over 10% and 44% predicting an increase of up to 10%. Additionally, 67% anticipate growth in plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) production, and 62% expect an uptick in hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) production.

Joerg Reger, managing director of ABB's Automotive Business Line, expressed cautious

optimism, stating that while professionals are hopeful for growth in 2025, uncertainties remain about meeting 100% EV production targets due to factors beyond factory control. Daniel Harrison, chief analyst for Automotive Manufacturing Solutions, added that the pace of EV adoption is currently too slow to meet legislative deadlines for a fully electric future, supporting the survey's main finding.



The Ford Ranger Raptor has long been a favourite among South African bakkie enthusiasts, blending rugged off-road capability with high-performance engineering. New Raptor retains its aggressive, tough-truck aesthetic looks that made its predecessor iconic but elevates it with a more purposeful and integrated design. The flared wheel arches and a bold “F-O-R-D” grille and Striking Matrix LED C-clamp headlights are enough to intimidate many a rear-view mirror but where you will really begin to see the Raptor shine is watching it tackle the harshest of terrains. Even the headlights with dynamic bending lights, glare-free high beams, and auto dynamic leveling will testify by offering enhanced visibility on tough off-road trails.

The new Raptor rides on 17-inch alloy wheels with 285/70 R17 BF Goodrich KO2 all-terrain tyres, ensuring grip in harsh conditions. At the rear, a raised tow bar and step pad improve its departure angle to 25 degrees, enhancing off-road capability. New colours such as Code Orange and Conquer Grey add a vibrant, adventurous look to the model differentiation.

At the heart of the new Raptor is its new twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 EcoBoost petrol engine, replacing the previous model's 2.0-litre diesel. This powerhouse produces 292 kW and 583 Nm – nearly double the output of the older version. The engine is paired with a 10-speed automatic gearbox and a permanent four-wheel-drive system for seamless instantaneous power delivery.

Performance gets a further boost from an advanced two-speed transfer case, locking differentials on both axles, and a rally-style anti-lag system in Baja mode that keeps the turbos spinning even after lifting off the throttle. Drivers can tailor performance using seven drive modes: Normal, Rock, Slippery, Mud & Ruts, Sand, Sport, and Baja. A four-mode exhaust system: Quiet, Normal, Sport, and Baja – allows drivers to control the vehicle's aggressive soundtrack.

Built for the toughest terrain, the Raptor's chassis is reinforced with stronger mounts and features redesigned suspension components. Aluminium upper and lower control arms and a long-travel setup provide flexibility and strength. At its core are 2.5-inch FOX Live Valve shocks with position sensitive damping that adjusts in real time for changing surfaces. Enhanced underbody protection, including a 2.3 mm high-strength steel front bash plate, helps it handle rugged trails confidently.

The cabin is inspired by fighter jets, with bolstered sports seats, Code Orange trim, and ambient lighting. A 12.4-inch digital instrument cluster and a 12-inch SYNC 4A infotainment system dominates the dash. Wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, wireless charging, and a Bang & Olufsen sound system enhance comfort and connectivity. Paddle shifters and a leather-wrapped steering wheel add to the performance feel.

Standard tech includes adaptive cruise control, blind-spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, and a 360-degree camera. The FordPass app allows remote vehicle access via FordPass Connect. Despite its high price, it offers arguably decent value through the four-year/120 000 km warranty along with Road-side Assistance.

Imported from Thailand, the Raptor is already enjoying strong demand. It competes with the Jeep Gladiator and VW Amarok but stands out for its rally DNA and extreme capabilities.

The new Ranger Raptor is a bold, capable, and tech-packed bakkie that redefines performance in its class. With its powerful V6, race-ready suspension, and modern features, it's built for serious adventure – both on- and off the beaten path.

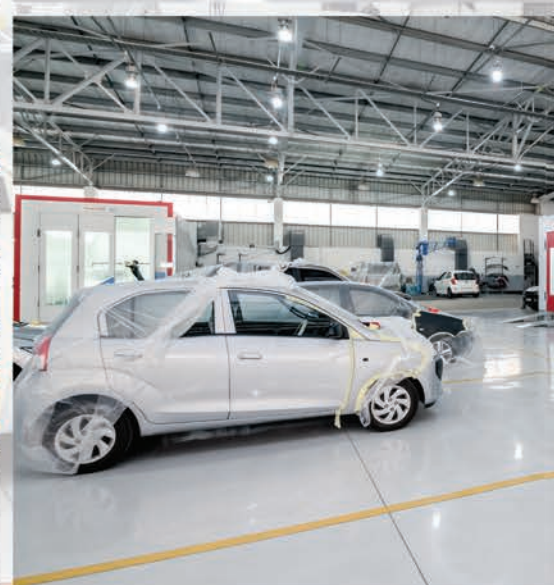
The starting price for a new Ford Ranger Raptor in South Africa is R1 226 700. This price includes a five-year warranty.



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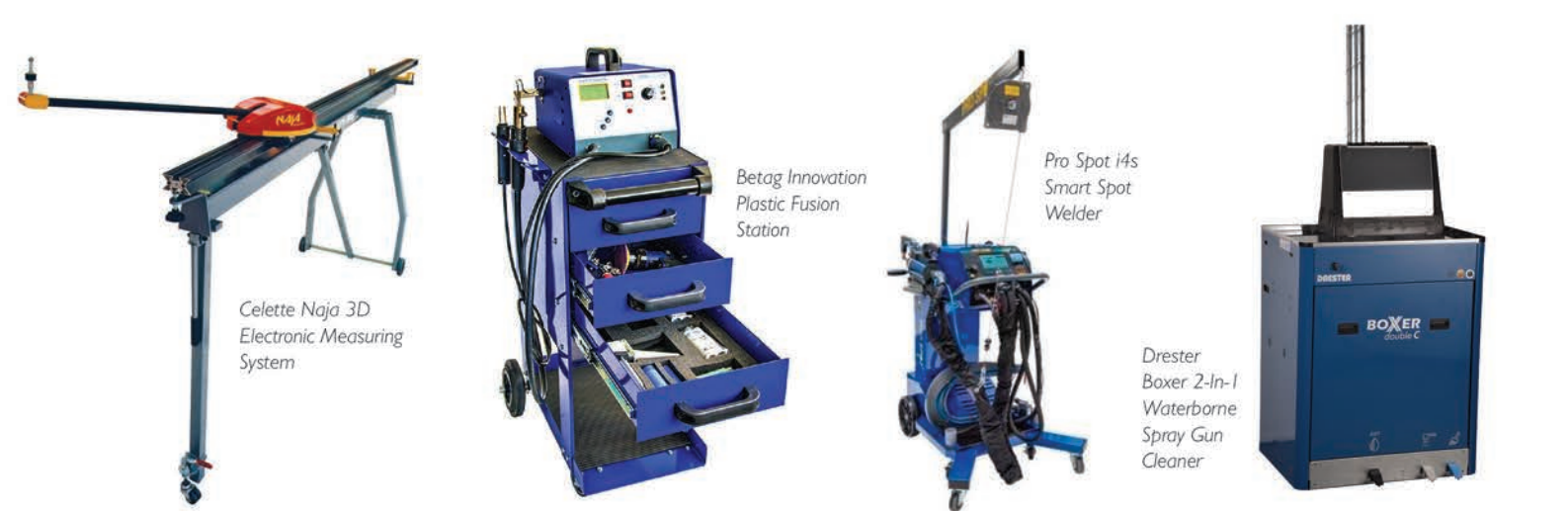
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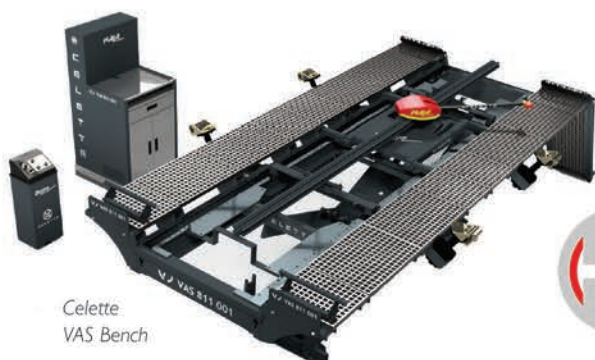
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Great export sales growth is coming from the amazing accurate world colour matching capability, says Zahid Vawda from Mix and Match.

REFINISH SYSTEM

MIX AND MATCH EXPAND EXPORT AFRICA SALES WITH THE CHALLENGER REFINISH BRAND

The Challenger refinish system from Axalta is fast gaining acceptance, says Zahid Vawda from Mix & Match Durban. Last year saw the addition of the CL 6500 Vehicle Express hardener coupled to an extensive range of toners which have greatly increased Challenger's colour matching capability.

"This has quickly gained acceptance across the sub-Saharan area especially," says Zahid. "We are now able to offer a comprehensive range of fillers, clearcoats and effect additives that are combined with easy-to-use ultra-fast colour retrieval packages in the refinish range."

The Mix & Match team are upbeat about the development of a fully compliant basecoat range. It forms a total solution to the every-exploding range of global car colours. It is designed for cost conscious body shops that demand colour accuracy from this top European paint maker brand.

World colours expansion

Last year alone saw 509 194 grey colours purchased in new vehicles sold. This on its own is around 26% of the world's new colours available. Another interesting trend

on colour is that approximately 70% of cars sold featured white, black, or grey scale. White is an obvious choice locally with South Africa's endless days of sunshine. It is also clear and highly visible and you are 12% less likely to have a white car in the collision stakes.

The trend to introduce Xyrrillic pearl toners and three-stage metallics has boosted the deep red, blue and dark grey sales of new vehicles in most countries, with close to 20% of these vibrant shades. These often accentuate the vehicle's body design and stance. These are now a big player in customer choice, and it is in this arena that the low VOC products are becoming a vital part of the colour matching state of repair.

Challenger offers colour tools with professional colour selection that enables fast colour identity in the paint shop. They have an extensive library of around 50 000 colour formulas at your fingertips when you use their colour tools.

Challenger also receives monthly updated vehicle formulas and shades, keeping it a speedy and accurate system. The Acquire RX Spectrophotometer finds accurate colours needed in an effective and accurate way.

Challenger also has a full range of high-performance anti-corrosion refinish primer range of high solid primers. VOC toners deliver excellent coverage along with a fast-recording time in the custom rectification process on all metallics, pearls and liquid Xyrrillics. As you would expect the Axalta overall clearcoat package is a top performer with excellent gloss retention and flow characteristics for complete resprays and panel repairs.

Mix & Match have a creative market approach with their Challenger refinish offer, as well as other ranges they carry. Their overnight national delivery and quick response to outstanding orders empower them – as Axalta's sole importer for the Challenger brand – to provide unparalleled service to body shop professionals throughout Southern Africa.

For more information on the Challenger range, call Zahid on +27 (0)82 786 0904, email: zahid@mixandmatch.co.za. Dealer enquiries from local and sub-Saharan parties are welcome.



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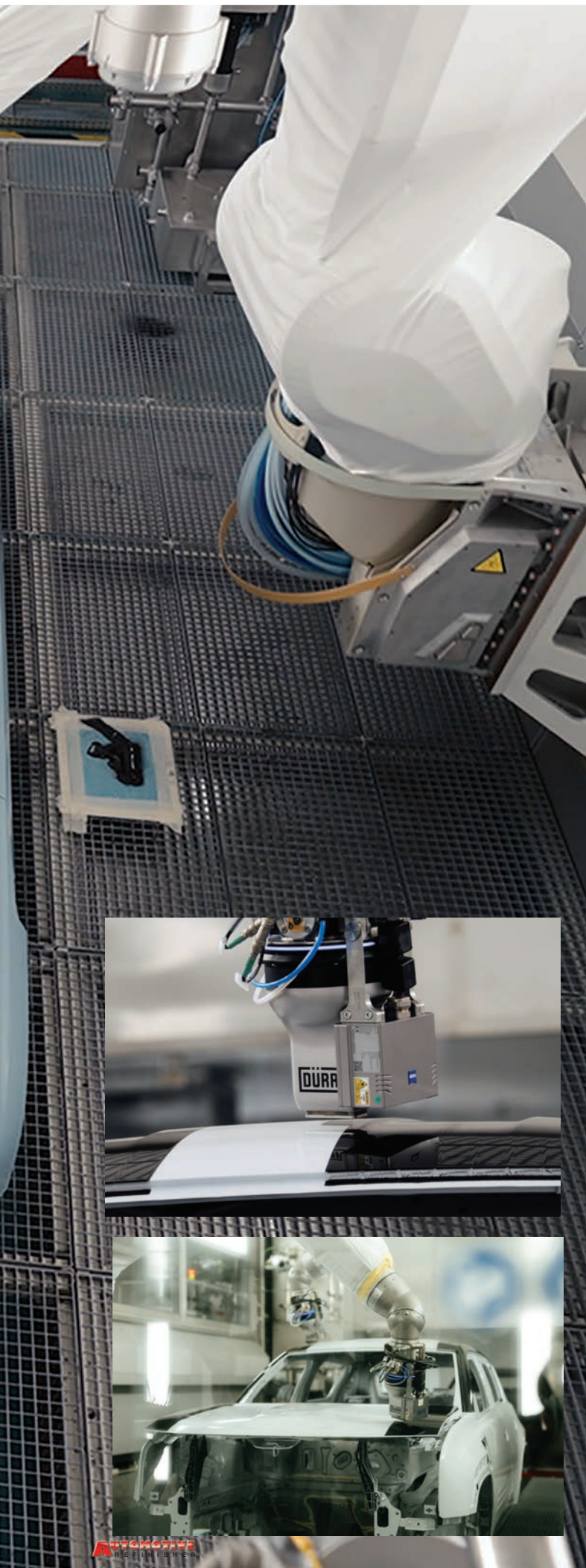
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OEM OPERATION

RENAULT 4 E-TECH ELECTRIC INTRODUCES REVOLUTIONARY TWO-TONE PAINT PROCESS



The Maubeuge plant in France, has been building the Renault Kangoo range since 1997. This year will mark a major change with the arrival of the iconic all-electric passenger car, Renault 4 E-Tech electric. At the same time, the site will debut a major innovation on the production line: the Jetprint Paint system for two-tone paintwork. This new, ultra-modern technology saves energy and emits less carbon, but its development and implementation posed a real challenge. Experts Katell and Frédéric tell us more.

For the production of Renault 4 E-Tech electric they produce the new Jetprint Paint booth at the Ampere site in Maubeuge, the roof and bonnet of Renault 4 E-Tech electric receive a two-tone paint finish, with a perfect line between the two colours. This premium finish is a great source of pride for Katell, head of the paint department. She played a key role in the on-site deployment of this innovative paint technology. "With this innovation, Renault 4 E-Tech electric can be personalised in a unique way, with or without the canvas roof, further underlining its exclusive status," she explains.

Implementing this innovation was a real challenge for Katell and all the members of the Maubeuge paint team, including Frédéric, paint sector consultant for the R4 project.

Everything about the process was new, from both a technical and a material perspective. "Jetprint Paint requires different technology and a different type of paint. So we developed a specific paint booth and organised training for employees," explains Frédéric.

From an organisational standpoint, integrating this innovation into the production process is a first for the Renault Group and also a world first for a full-line manufacturer. The team faced a two-fold challenge in deploying this new process, while also starting production of the first all-electric passenger car at the Maubeuge plant. "The timing was ambitious to say the least!" remembers Katell, before adding: "everything had to be fully operational well before the launch of Renault 4 E-Tech electric."

A technology with numerous benefits

Traditionally, a two-tone finish is obtained by sending vehicles back to the paint shop on the main production line for a second time. "Specifically, car bodies were painted in the main colour selected by the customer and then dried in an oven. We then had to protect the body with tarpaulins and masking tape, a process involving many hours of manual labour, before sending the car back to the main paint shop for a second coat of paint, but this time only on the two-tone areas," continues Katell. This method was complex, time-consuming, and energy-intensive, with the car having to be dried twice in the ovens. It also required a significant quantity of consumables and generated considerable waste.

"Jetprint Paint changes everything!" says Frédéric with a smile. The two-tone process is now integrated with the production line. This means that manual masking, tarpaulins, and protective plastic are no longer necessary. "We have a higher level of productivity and considerably less waste," continues Frédéric. Another advantage of Jetprint Paint is that the technology is 100% efficient, while completely eliminating paint waste.

As the final oven drying stage is no longer necessary, the process saves 1.7 GWh of electricity per year. "That's equivalent to the annual consumption of 350 households and 331 tonnes of non-emitted CO2," says Frédéric with enthusiasm.

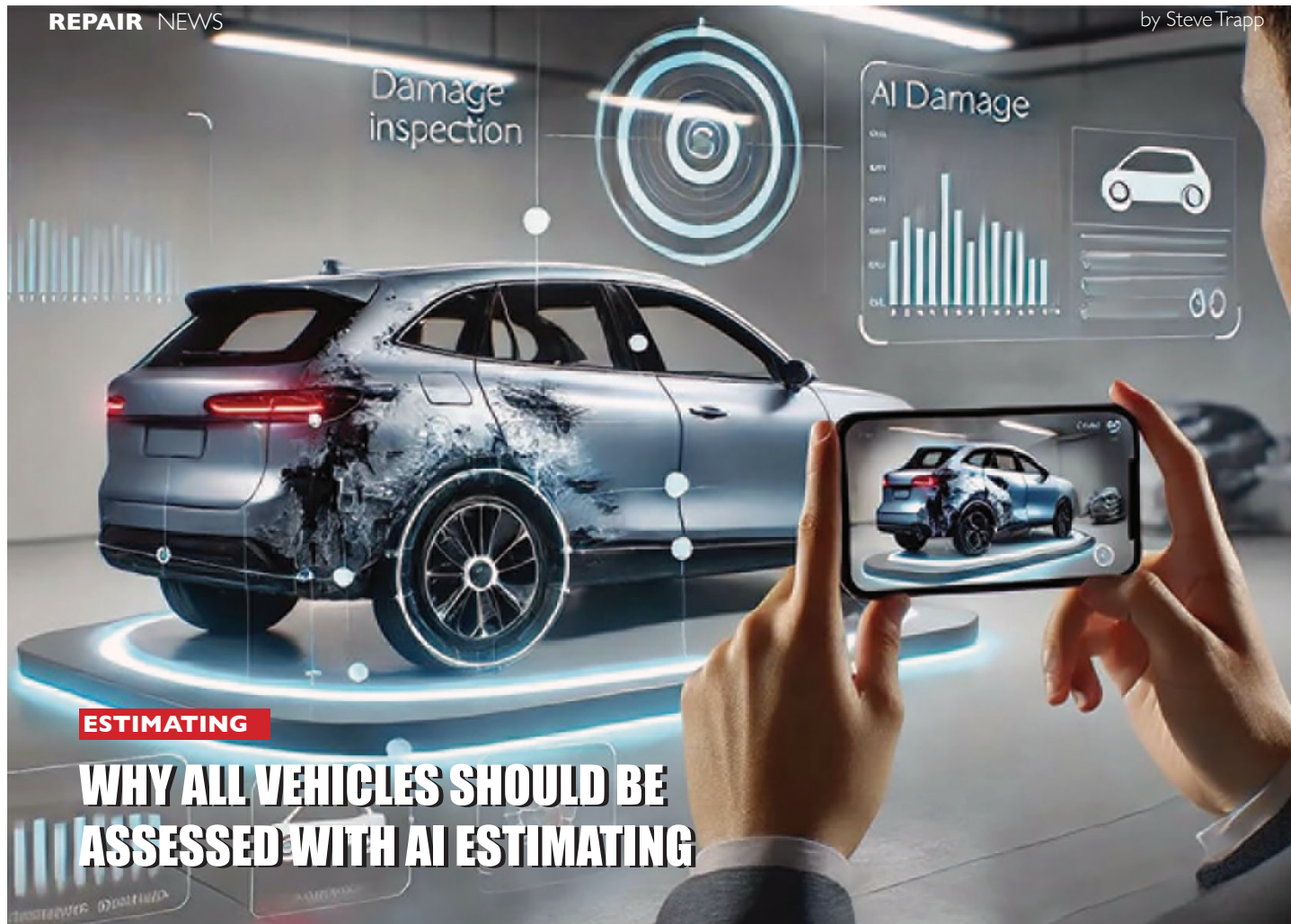
An innovation inspired by the printing industry

Inaugurated on Renault 4 E-Tech electric, Jetprint Paint uses a technology known as paint printing. "This innovation delivers extremely high levels of precision, making it ideal for two-tone paintwork" continues Frédéric.

A jet of paint of between one and 50 mm in width is directed by the force of pressure and gravity onto the body of the car. "Two robots paint the roof and bonnet of Renault 4 E-Tech electric in just six minutes" says Frédéric.

For comparison, paint jets body are between 30 and 45 cm wide when painting the entire body. Using atomisation technology, the paint takes the form of a mist sprayed onto the body using compressed air and high-voltage technology. "Jetprint Paint is a real revolution in vehicle paint shops," explains Katell.

This new paint process has so many qualities that Katell is thinking big. "The future prospects for Jetprint Paint extend well beyond two-tone paintwork." This technology could be used to develop bespoke paintwork for business fleets and highly customised finishes for private customers. The range of possibilities is huge. "Jetprint Paint contributes to a more sustainable production. And the exceptional quality of finish gives it a bright future within the group," concluded Katell.



Taking root in our world, AI... we all sense the risk it might pose if taken too far. But in this article, we want to challenge you to embrace AI estimating for nearly all estimates as soon as possible. That bold statement begs an explanation, and this article aims to support the conclusion that all vehicles should be assessed with AI estimating.

Assignment to inspection

Statistically, according to CCC, the industries' DRPs miss out on 27% of the opportunities on assignments because customers don't get called in a timely manner and choose to go elsewhere. This means we miss 27% of the work assigned to us that should be a lay-up. You can engage AI through Body Shop Booster or another provider to secure those assignments and get accurate customer information. They really do follow the script and attempt to get a commitment to show up for an "inspection."

As your staff (or the AI resource) makes initial contact with potential customers, it is important to express empathy and take control of the call and gather basic customer and vehicle information. Then the new AI estimating process takes centre stage. To triage the job, it is crucial that you communicate to the customer how important or valuable it is to get solid images of the vehicle's four corners and of the damage to the vehicle from a few other angles.

Images for the Initial Inspection

Once these images are received electronically, we suggest they be assigned to someone to create a preliminary inspection report. CCC has launched JumpStart, and Body Shop Booster has integrated Tractable (and Mitchell and Solara have announced plans to be equipped with a similar product in the next few months) to help write these AI estimates for us. The target is to save your staff the time to write 85-90% of the estimate lines off the images to evaluate the job's type, assess how many panels need repair (if that is how you determine job type), and the relative size of the job in labour hours.

This initial AI inspection report can do a few valuable things:

- Help triage the level of damage the vehicle has incurred.
- Minor or small repair (one to two panels) – Initial inspection can be provided and painted parts ordered for the day when the vehicle

arrives.

- Medium repair (two to four panels) – The vehicle is scheduled for an "advanced inspection" (possible minor disassembly, as they do in world markets) to determine the extent of damage, but the basic inspection report can be generated by AI.

- Large or heavy hits – (three or more panels). You can use the images to prewrite the inspection report so the vehicle repair cost can be estimated to determine if the vehicle is a total. If not, it saves 80% of the time it takes to write the eventual advanced inspection report.

You can use the images and AI estimate to determine which panels will need to be repaired or replaced and how many will require paintwork.

Once you get them comfortable with having your repair centre do the work, you can then solicit a signed work authorisation and pre-order parts. NOTE: Have the customer sign a work authorisation and provide a credit card advanced authorisation to minimise cancellations.

The advance is you have subsequently worked to schedule the repair in any of the three forms:

- Provided a firm price and sold the minor repair customer on scheduling the repair.
- Scheduled the medium repair in for an "advanced inspection."
- Had the vehicle towed to your repair centre (and then add it to the schedule).

Advanced inspection process

With the assumption that the time that used to be invested in writing an "estimate" has been minimised using AI estimating and the advanced inspections are scheduled, we want to set the expectation that we have written a basic estimate. But we still may take 20-45 minutes to dig a bit deeper to assure we accurately capture all the damage using borescopes, mirrors, and performing minor disassembly to get a fairly accurate assessment. Also, while on site it is important to use the paint spectrophotometer to determine the colour and any special circumstances (quad, limited-use toners, pearl, etc.). Next, it's up to a designated person to use these inspections to guide which OEM procedures to research to then attach to the RO file for the technicians to utilise. Then, the AI estimate is updated now that you

have more clarity as to the types of damage you are repairing.

Pre-order parts on all vehicles on the schedule

With parts availability cited as the biggest challenge during the repair planning and body repair process, we need to seek ways to get these parts coming to the shop ASAP.

After an AI estimate is written and the advanced inspection enhances it, we want to source all the parts which are obviously damaged. This allows the dealer to get these parts as part of their "stock order" and time to source them from distant places to assure they are on site when the vehicle arrives on the scheduled date.

Definition of a critical part

A "critical part" is any part needed to complete tasks in the next downstream department. This most often implies that the larger complex assemblies must be there before the vehicle arrives. That means that during morning release meetings, the parts manager needs to have confirmed the critical parts are there for vehicles arriving over the next two days – so we don't have customers dropping off vehicles for which we don't have "critical parts" to begin repairs. If customers knew we didn't have the parts and we inconvenienced them by dropping off their vehicle, they wouldn't be too happy.

Receiving process – pre-scan, pre-wash, and initial on-vehicle notes

As customers drop off their vehicle at the scheduled time, it's very important to move the vehicles from the arrival area to an area where you attach the pre-scan tool and check the bulbs/dash lights while the staff install floor and seat mats and then prewash the vehicle to make prior unrelated damage more obvious to see and minimise dirt in work areas for the technicians. Once the vehicle is put in the pending repair plan area, it can be prioritised (either by job size or the sequence of which the technician assigned to the job should begin the process) to ensure repair planning can begin as soon as possible.

Often, during this pre-repair planning phase, the parts are 720-degree (inside and out inspection) mirror-matched and then the complex painted assemblies are sent to Paint (with a card listing all the loose parts to be painted and paint code) to be painted on both sides with other vehicles to optimise booth cycles.

Transfer of the parts during repair planning

This is where the AI assessment and advanced inspection process they support (including pre-ordering of parts) pay off in time savings... vehicles are then taken to the repair planning work area or to the stall of the technician who may eventually perform the repair along with the painted parts which have been pre-painted so the transfer process can begin. Another key process to add-in is to rough-pull sheet metal (or attempt a plastic repair) for which you are unsure you can repair or replace the part. And pre-pull the frame to get an accurate record of what the vehicle will need. Further, a detailed mechanical diagnosis (on a lift) should be performed to minimise later concerns.

Technicians are now way more willing to 100%-disassemble the complex assemblies because they can transfer the R & I part to the parts pre-painted as the vehicle arrives. It is during this parts transfer process that the true magic occurs. It is during this preliminary reassembly process that technicians begin to see the missing, lost, broken, or damaged parts which are needed at reassembly. They can test bulbs or other components for function which may normally be caught after the repair is near completion.

Also, much of the time invested (possibly wasted, depending upon your perspective) ie: bagging and tagging parts is largely unnecessary. The on-vehicle notes guide the visualisation of the remaining repair processes to speed the body repairs, painting, and reassembly process.

The key to repair planning is: "Have you answered all the questions you can to ensure the need for a second supplement is eliminated or at least minimised?" If so, we can save time waiting for parts during reassembly and can improve overall hours per working day.

What are the biggest benefits of using AI to aid the repair planning process?

Looking back, then, the key to this entire refined process is the AI estimate, which saves us time in assessing the damage, triaging the repair level for scheduling of advanced inspections or repairs, and ultimately helping us get the customers authorisation to trigger the pre-order of the parts. Once these critical parts arrive, they can be pre-painted and then parts can be transferred during repair planning. All these elements help minimise the question marks which may lead to a second, third, fourth, or more parts orders/supplements.



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In the competitive body repair industry, it's rare for a company to take a different approach and lead with their hearts. That's why when it happens, it's worth taking note. Florida Panelbeaters have taken it upon themselves to make a difference for the positive in the automotive repair industry. Their training initiative has been operating since late last year.

Marlon Tibbetts, the company's technical expert, has taken on the challenge of training unemployed young people from the local Florida area, located West of Johannesburg. The company operates out of their spacious body shop on Hull Street and has gathered a team of retired journeymen from various disciplines – body repair, mechanical and spray painting – to assist and mentor the apprentices.

There are 37 trainees. Thirteen of these students are from the local TVET college who have already received theoretical training but need hands-on hours to implement what they have learnt. The rest of the students are walk-ins who saw the advertisement on the side of the body shop. The trainees work responsibly and are always on time.

The students work hard from 07h30 to 17h00 every day, with no wages, in exchange for the opportunity to gain skills and build a future in the industry and for themselves. "They are hungry to learn, happy for the opportunity, and are really fast learners as well.

The results are already speaking for themselves and it's still early days." Says Marlon.

As company owner Nicolette Tibbetts explains: "The programme has been incredibly well received. So much so, that we've recently purchased an additional property next door that we want to convert into accommodation for students as well as extra training space." The demand for trade training has skyrocketed, with the waiting list for new students now reaching 60.

Marlon, who has overcome a period of poor health, says this is his second chance in life and that it's his vocational mission to give back to the industry.

Florida Panelbeaters completes 30 cars a week while simultaneously carrying out this mentorship programme.

Despite the centre's success, it's disappointing that there has been no support from Merseta and other government and political parties. Once again, it's up to us to set our own goals and achieve them. Marlon remains optimistic. "The good-hearted ethics of our company will win out," he says. "We're moving forward, like we always do – with faith and determination. We are already making a difference to each and every individual in training."

If any sponsors or like-minded passionate companies would like to join this initiative, reach out to Nicolette on +27 (0)11 472 4441 or nicky@floridapanelbeaters.co.za.

TRAINING

FLORIDA PANEL BEATERS TRAINING CENTRE

Basic body preparation is the foundation of a perfect finish.





See here from left to right: Nicholas Choonilall, and Nicolette and Marlon Tibbetts who have spearheaded this initiative.



By using retired panelbeaters for mentorship the learners pick up the basic skills fast and the excellent skills such as Owen Wellen (left) has, are not lost to the industry.



Once the basics of preparation have been harnessed, the importance of colour is taught and trained on as the next point.



In the workshop, there is a production hum as happy students enjoy learning a trade and hopeful of a better future as they master new skills.

WHAT'S HOT?

10 PREDICTIONS THAT WILL SHAPE THE WORLD'S AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY THIS YEAR



GlobalData's analysts have put on their thinking caps and come up with a list of ten trends they believe will shape the world's auto industry in this era of extreme disruption for these businesses.

1: Affordable EVs for Europe

European car makers are expected to fight back strongly against the affordability of Chinese EVs in their market. This means small EVs priced around R40 000, half the price of an EV in Europe in 2023.

2: China will roll out autonomous driving on a commercial scale

A more relaxed regulatory stance by the authorities in relation to self-driving cars will help spread autonomous driving in China. China chose 21 cities in 2024 that will participate in Level 4 autonomous driving pilot programmes.

3: Advanced technology will encourage development of vertical take-off and landing electric vehicles

For instance, Volkswagen is developing solid state lithium batteries that can charge to 80% capacity in only 15 minutes.

4: China will remain dominant in global EV markets

China is expected to build on its considerable lead in the global EV market, partly due to access to the bulk of raw materials needed for making EV batteries at competitive prices. It is also driving EV sales outside China.

5: Trade tensions will be high

The return of Donald Trump to the White House will once again raise the possibility of the U.S. adopting a protectionist stance in international trade, including raising tariffs, while the EU is still in talks with China over tariffs for BEVs sold in Europe.

6: Chinese OEMs will continue to target the European market

Several Chinese brands have already made significant inroads into Europe, including showing strong support for motor shows to

expose their products. MG is set to be the biggest of these Chinese brands in Europe with an estimated 280 000 sales in 2025. Luxury Chinese brands are also showing a desire to take on the European domestic models on their own turf.

7: Look to Japan and Korea for hydrogen applications

Hydrogen is seen as a viable energy source for certain types of vehicles and Japan and South Korea are leading this race for dominance. Toyota and Hyundai are already offering hydrogen models for sale to the public.

8: BEV sales are lower than earlier forecasts but there is some optimism

Although sales of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) continue to grow globally growth slowed in 2024 as buyers moved to other powertrain options, mainly full hybrids, plug-in EVs and extended range EVs. Sales of BEVs have even been lower than those for diesel-engined cars in some months in 2014. There could be more government driven stimulus through incentives to protect local industries.

9: Europe's vehicle makers and suppliers will continue to wrestle with overcapacity and restructuring

Manufacturing over capacity and rising costs, particularly in terms of energy in Europe, is forcing OEMs to restructure and downsize to remain profitable. Cost pressures are being felt throughout the supply chain as OEMs strive to cut costs in all aspects of the value chain.

10: Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence)

This technology is increasingly being incorporated into vehicles by several of the large manufacturers to enhance the customer experience, while improving overall functionality of a vehicle. Some makers are already integrating Chatbots into their cars, while they also allow dealerships to use them as virtual sales assistants to manage customer queries.

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CLASSIC CORNER

SIMOLA HILLCLIMB



The Simola Hillclimb held at Knysna last month marked the 15th edition of this iconic motorsport event, where Charles Arton secured his second Classic Conqueror title, a decade after his first victory in 2015. Known as South Africa's premier motorsport event and considered the world's fastest hillclimb, the event attracts competitors and spectators from around the globe, offering thrilling races in a scenic yet challenging environment.

Arton's win was a remarkable comeback, considering the hurdles he had faced in the years following his first title. Driving his 1979 March 79A Formula Atlantic single-seater, Arton overcame a series of setbacks, including significant damage to his car in a fire after the 2017 event. The car required a six-year rebuild, followed by issues with a malfunctioning Cosworth BDG engine. Despite these difficulties, Arton's perseverance paid off, and he was able to get his car into top form just in time for this year's event.

The weather conditions during the celebrated hillclimb added another layer of difficulty, with intermittent rain and low temperatures

making tyre choices crucial. The Top 10 Shootout saw Arton and 2023 winner Andre Bezuidenhout in a tense battle, especially in the wet conditions. Arton opted for slick tyres, a risky choice, but his strategy paid off as he set the fastest time of the shootout at 44.436 seconds, edging out Bezuidenhout by just 0.598 seconds. Bezuidenhout had led in the Class Finals with a time of 47.051 seconds, but Arton's calculated approach to the unpredictable weather ultimately led to his victory.

Reflecting on his victory, Arton spoke about the challenges of the past decade, particularly the extensive rebuild of his car and the difficulties with the engine. His victory was a testament to both his driving skill and his ability to overcome adversity, making the win all the more unique. "This is such a special win, 10 years later, especially after all we've been through," Arton said.

In addition to Arton's success, the event featured other strong performances. Andre Bezuidenhout, driving the 1976 Lola T460, finished second overall with a time of 45.034 seconds. Ian Schofield, driving the 1977 March 77B, placed third with a time of 47.051 seconds.





Robert Wolk finished fourth in the 1979 Van Diemen RF Formula Ford (49.201 seconds), while Rui Campos, in the 1974 Porsche 911 RSR, led the tin-top entries with a fifth-place finish (49.252 seconds). Several other competitors, including Gavin Rooke, Craig Wessels, Enzo Kuun, Josh Dovey, and Rick Morris, also made strong showings in the Top 10 Shootout.

Another special moment was the presentation of the "Spirit of Dave Charlton" Award, named in honour of the legendary South African race driver. The award, which recognises competitors who embody Charlton's commitment to meticulous preparation and performance, was awarded to Trevor Tuck, an Alfa Romeo enthusiast with over 25 years of experience, was recognised for his dedication in preparing and racing Alfa Romeos, regularly winning his class at the Simola Hillclimb.

As the event concluded, it was clear that this event continues to

grow in stature and appeal. While the competition has evolved into a world-class motorsport event, it has maintained the community spirit and camaraderie that has always been a hallmark of the event. Arton's victory symbolised this growth, as it reflected both his personal triumph and the ongoing success of the event.

In his closing remarks, Arton expressed gratitude to the organisers, particularly Ian Shrosbree and Geoff Goddard, for their efforts in ensuring the Simola Hillclimb remains on the international motorsport calendar. The 2025 event not only showcased outstanding driving but also highlighted the sense of community and shared passion for motorsport that continues to make the Simola Hillclimb event a unique and exciting event for all.


OPINION

AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN – THE BEST EVER OR IN A RUT?

Better by design? Not necessarily so, according to Andrew Marsh FIMI, Director of Autobody Bible, a new online resource for collision repairers. He discusses the design dilemmas facing consumers and how these might eventually impact on repairers as EU and UK-based manufacturers battle it out for their custom.

Trying to decode how a manufacturer has come up with a model – Ford Capri for example – is fun, especially when trying to decipher what customer it will attract. A Lamborghini Urus is not inexpensive, the external parts and much of the interior is unique to Lamborghini, the order books – small – are full. Yet all the main investments – body structure, powertrain, suspension/steering – are based on components originated from or shared with Audi, Volkswagen as well as Porsche.

So, the speculation begins

Just what does a customer see in a Urus that they don't see in an Audi RS Q8, or the Bentley Bentayga? Urus represents the spirit of Lamborghini and the reality – a user might well own mid-engine models as well but aware that the Urus is the work horse which has the same relatively extreme design language. Before we think about other concepts, a Lamborghini saloon for example is going to take some hefty marketing – and might work, but right now, is less likely to.

In effect, the land of super expensive cars has accepted 'legends' which reward lucky owners with lower than usual rate of depreciation, some fine but largely invisible vehicles (Aston Martin DBX, for example) which are not complimented the same way, and tortured lesser vehicles dressed by the likes of Kahn Design or... Mansory. The latter vehicles are usually taste free, but the companies seem to sell their confections to a dedicated, if tiny number of buyers.

Mainstream conformity

The typical aspirational vehicle from China, for example, will have pure electric or PHEV powertrain – the latter to get around impending EU27 tax tariffs. The body will have light bars on both ends, have a Qualcomm Snapdragon processing chip for immense in-car entertainment which appears on acres of touch screens. Of course, these vehicles will be marketed as 'close to', 'equal to' or 'better than' Porsche, which is a lump of internal China marketing lobbed into the international vehicle market. The vehicles? Anything from a Tesla Model Y competitor to one step removed from an e-Scooter.

The deeper problem

European design studios have recycled designers, and in the process ended up with an average set of design themes. Recently these have been tuned with 'bling' and extended rear seat legroom to appeal to customers in China, but that market has become increasingly self-satisfied with domestic products. After all, China is set to build 32 million vehicles – one-third of the global output – in 2025.

In effect the averaged design combined with corporate identity means, for example, badges from Audi to SEAT to Škoda to Volkswagen can be applied to any design – the individual brand language has been diluted. In turn this leads to real consumer confusion, and for the manufacturer, the potential to have sales success with lower margin products at the expense of more profitable vehicles.

Yet, JLR for example with a pretty long record of 'difficulties', seems not to have too much difficulty selling vehicles. In other words, the consumer is driven by more than the outer skin form or interior features of the vehicle. The vehicles have 'soul' – or, at least, I think that's what customers say!

Why should collision repairers care?

We are on the cusp of a truly huge event. If the EU and UK-based vehicle manufacturers don't sort out their identity, they face a long, hard battle with the might of China. European manufacturers carry inherently higher wage costs, higher energy costs and usually are first to create something whereas the China manufacturers still prefer endlessly reverse engineering products 'as seen' elsewhere.

It's a battle the EU27 plus UK manufacturers cannot simply give into.

Mazda produced a perfectly capable saloon and estate called Mazda6, which appeared in 2013. It was equipped generously with ADAS and did very little wrong. It met with some success, following a long line of similar products from the days of the 626.

However, this appeared at the same time SUVs were high fashion, estates sold in limited numbers globally, mainly in Europe, and it soldiered on with two facelifts until 2023. Of course, by this time some aspects of the SUV craze had started to frazzle, and the European market in effect needed a pure electric powertrain replacement model.

Enter the Mazda6e

This is what our future looks like. Mazda6e is the product of a partnership between Mazda and Changan Automobile. Changan via its China only brand Deepal launched the 5-door hatch SL03 on its brand-new BEV 'EPA1' in 2022. By 2024 the SL03 was facelifted to become the L07, complete with Huawei's 'Qiankun Smart Driving' ADS SE autonomous driving system. This was also introduced on the saloon S07.

At the same time, Changan Mazda revealed their first joint venture based on L07 in April 2024 called the Mazda EZ-6. Compared to the Changan base model, the EZ-6 had revised bumpers, front wings, bonnet, headlights, taillights, rear quarter glass and rear quarter panel. The Mazda EZ-6 production started in July 2024 with domestic sales starting in early November 2024.

Meanwhile, Mazda Europe was busy planning for the Mazda EZ-6 to become the Mazda6e, due to be delivered to European consumers by the middle of 2025.

This is the point. EU27 plus UK is where significantly greater profit per vehicle can be realised, yet we are almost the last to get the new model. One can only imagine what the rest of the support – software, parts, and more – will be like, but I am sure Mazda Europe will do their best to provide what is needed.

If the consumer is confused by all of this, then the idea of ownership excitement will be more elusive. If so, there is less drive to keep a vehicle in good shape. These are the big dangers for our sector, and we need to follow this closely to maintain repair volumes.

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WHAT'S HOT?

AUTOMECHANIKA SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA ROADSHOW EXPANDS AFTERMARKET POSSIBILITIES

Messe Frankfurt South Africa has announced the launch of its 2025 Automechanika Buyers and Visitors Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) Roadshow, a strategic initiative designed to connect automotive aftermarket businesses in SSA and encourage visitors from the region to attend Automechanika Johannesburg 2025.

The roadshow commenced in Gaborone, Botswana, before moving on to Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and Namibia ahead of the 10th anniversary event at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg, from 28 to 30 October.

A vision for African collaboration

Michael Dehn, Managing Director of Messe Frankfurt South Africa, emphasises the significance of the roadshow: "The Automechanika SSA Roadshow is a testament to our commitment to fostering regional collaboration and unlocking the potential of Sub-Saharan Africa's automotive aftermarket, especially in times where suppliers have to be on the lookout for new markets."

"Starting in Botswana, this initiative will empower businesses to connect with new markets and showcase their innovations. We are excited to bring the Automechanika brand closer to industry professionals across the continent, paving the way for a transformative experience at Automechanika Johannesburg 2025."

A Gateway to emerging markets

The SSA Roadshow facilitates connections between automotive aftermarket businesses and regions, inviting them to visit the show in Johannesburg. By touring key SADC markets the roadshow enables exhibitors to join the roadshow, fostering regional collaboration and mutual business growth.

The roadshow's initial stop in Gaborone brings together industry leaders, suppliers, and buyers of vehicle parts, components, accessories, management and digital solutions, repair and maintenance products, car wash and reconditioning solutions and electronic systems. It will also explore the global trends and the latest developments in the automotive industry, including electric vehicles and e-mobility.

Botswana's thriving automotive aftermarket

"Botswana's automotive industry



Thomas Molebatsi, project manager of the Botswana investment and Trade Centre, were partners for Automechanika Johannesburg's information session in Gaborone. He is seen with Tracy Gounden, Business Development and Portfolio Director.

represents a significant untapped potential for investors and entrepreneurs," continues Dehn. "As one of Africa's most politically stable and economically progressive nations, Botswana offers new opportunities."

The country's growing middle class, improving infrastructure, and government initiatives to diversify the economy beyond diamonds create favourable conditions for automotive ventures. Promising areas for investment include vehicle assembly operations, aftermarket parts manufacturing, electric vehicle infrastructure development, and specialised maintenance services.

Botswana's membership of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) provides duty-free access to neighbouring markets, while its proximity to South Africa, the continent's largest automotive market, offers logistical advantages. The government's focus on skills development and investment incentives through the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) further enhances the sector's appeal.

Dehn says that Botswana represents a significant opportunity for forward-thinking automotive businesses due to its relatively low market saturation compared to other

African nations and increasing regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). "By establishing a presence in Botswana early on, businesses can gain a competitive advantage in a developing market," he says.

Regional reach for exhibitors and visitors

The SSA Roadshow provides exhibitors with exclusive sponsorship opportunities to enhance their brand visibility across multiple countries to complement their participation at Automechanika Johannesburg. From customised marketing packages to prime locations at roadshow events, businesses can engage with a diverse audience and establish long-term relationships.

Visitors, comprising trade professionals and decision-makers, will benefit from insights into emerging technologies, sustainable solutions and industry best practices, all of which will be showcased at Automechanika Johannesburg 2025.

For more information on the Road Show and Automechanika Johannesburg contact Tracy Gounden, Business Development and Portfolio Director on 0820638157 or at tracygounden@za.messefrankfurt.com.

The roadshow into Africa is a strategic initiative to connect automotive aftermarket businesses in the SADAC region and encourage visitors to attend the show later this year.



automechanika
JOHANNESBURG

28-30 Oct 2025
Gallagher Convention
Centre, Midrand, JHB



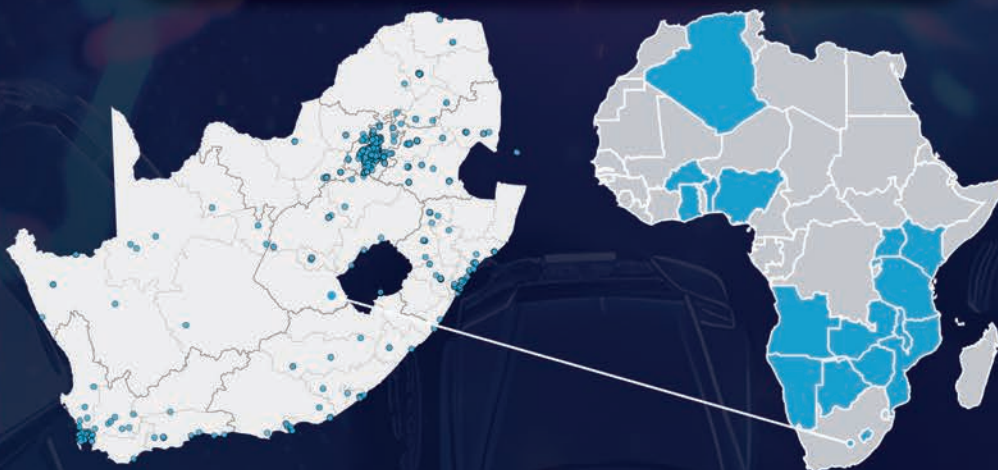
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Actual visitor origin of Automechanika Johannesburg 2024



For more information and exhibition space please contact:
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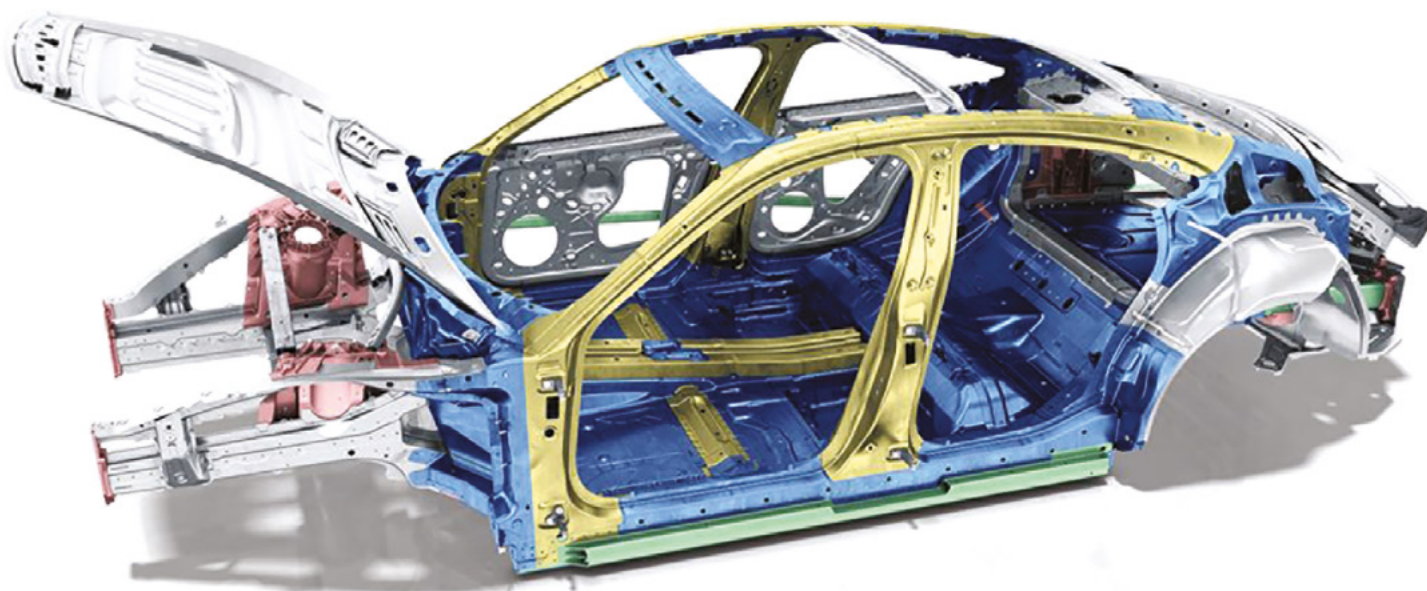


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TRENDS

THE 2025 LIGHTWEIGHTING TREND; HOW EUROPEAN INNOVATIONS ARE COMPLICATING REPAIRS



- Steel sheet (hotformed)
- Steel sheet (coldformed)
- Aluminium sheet
- Aluminium Extrusion profile
- Cast aluminium

Walk into any European body shop today, and you'll hear the same frustration. Cars are getting harder to repair.

Vehicle manufacturers are driven to reduce weight and increase fuel efficiency (fossil as well as electricity) by stringent EU emissions targets, but in doing so, they've created vehicles that are nightmares to fix after a crash. For instance, the sleek new 2025 BMW 5 Series is a marvel of engineering – the body structure blends aluminium, ultra-high-strength steel, and carbon fibre-reinforced plastics (CFRP) for better structural performance and efficiency. However, after impact, that cutting-edge design becomes a logistical and financial headache for repairers.

Many decades ago, damaged steel-based body structures could be pulled and reshaped with relative ease. However, many of the European based manufacturers have embraced multi-material construction, making traditional repair methods obsolete. The advent of large, heat-treated pressure die cast aluminium alloy elements, crucial structural components, mean that even minor front-end damage can require a complete sub-assembly replacement rather than a simple panel repair. Welding, once a

staple of crash repair, has been complicated by adhesive bonding with weld and even self-piercing rivets, requiring body shops to invest in expensive new tools as well as specialised training.

The 2025 Audi Q5 presents similar challenges. In pursuit of greater efficiency and lower CO2 emissions, Audi has incorporated the Premium Platform Combustion (PPC) lightweight body structure combining multiple grades of high-strength steel alloy as well as aluminium. It's an engineering triumph – stiffer, and lighter than ever before. But if a Q5 suffers damage to its A-pillars or side sills, repairing it isn't as simple as cutting out the affected section and welding in a new piece. Instead, technicians must follow strict manufacturer guidelines, often requiring factory-approved adhesives and rivets. Without the right tools or training, many independent shops are turning away repairs on these vehicles, leaving customers with fewer options and higher costs.

A recent 2024 study by the European Federation of Bodyshops (FIEV) found that repair costs for lightweight vehicles have risen by an average of 28% over the past five years, mainly due to the shift toward exotic materials and complex assembly techniques.

The Peugeot 408 Hybrid, for example, features an ultra-light composite tailgate – a move that saves weight but makes even minor rear-end damage far more expensive to fix. Unlike steel or aluminium, composite materials can't be reshaped or welded; in most cases, if the damage is not minor, the panel must be entirely replaced, driving up both parts and labour costs.

For European body shops, the lightweight trend represents a crossroads. Manufacturers are racing ahead to meet their legal obligations while delivering better refinement for consumers, yet many repairers struggle to keep up. The investment required for OEM certification, specialised tooling, and training is substantial – those who fail to adapt risk being shut out of an increasingly high-tech repair market.

Despite the challenges, one thing is clear: lightweight is here to stay. With EU regulations tightening and consumer demand for efficiency growing, vehicle manufacturers will only push further into advanced materials. But as European repairers know all too well, innovation on the production line often comes at a cost – and it's the body shops and their customers who are left paying the price.

LOCAL UPDATE

AWARD FOR 60-YEAR OLD ALFA ROMEO GTA EVOKES FOND MEMORIES FOR ARNOLD CHATZ



Roger Houghton
News from the Zoo

The recognition given by the highly rated Motor Klassik magazine from Germany to the Alfa Romeo GTA as readers' favourite in the Italian Classics category of the 2025 Motor Klassik awards evoked fond memories of this car for Arnold Chatz, who raced one of them successfully in South Africa from 1969.

The Alfa Romeo GTA was launched in Italy in 1965 and remains a standout model among classic cars 60 years later. It attracted 37.6% of the votes by 17 000 Motor Klassik readers in the Italian Classics category of the competition, putting it ahead of renowned, iconic models from the likes of Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati.

The GTA was developed by Autodelta, Alfa Romeo's racing department. It was based on the coupe version of the Giulia, known as the Sprint GT, but instead of the normal steel body this special derivative had light alloy bodywork and weighed just 745 kg, which was 200 kg lighter than the standard Sprint GT. (The "A" in the model name was derived from the Italian word "alleggerita" which means "lightened.")

Its 1.6 litre four-cylinder engine, with twin overhead camshafts and dual spark ignition, was one of the most advanced power units of its era. The standard engine was then modified for racing by Autodelta and produced 170 horsepower in its final iteration.

The GTA was available only in red or white and was distinguished by Quadrifoglio Verde (four leaf clover) stickers on the front bodywork as a traditional Alfa Romeo lucky charm. Only 500 of these 1.6 litre models were produced, together with the same number of 1.3-litre models.

The Alfa GTA was an immediate success in motor racing and genuine examples are nowadays highly sought after by classic car collectors, fetching prices well over R2 million, while cars with a documented racing history are worth as much as three times this amount.

Now back to the South African connection.

Arnold Chatz, a leading saloon car racer from the 1960's to 1980's, says: "I was indeed privileged to begin my wonderful 16-year racing involvement with Alfa Romeo in the GTA when I took over the factory car from my friend, Basil van Rooyen, in 1969. The engine in this car had been 'stretched' from 1600 cc to 1833 cc by Basil, with complex engineering changes including some external piping for the cooling system which could not be incorporated into the cylinder block with its enlarged cylinder bores.

"I enjoyed immediate success with it and

over the years we improved performance further after I paid several visits to Carlo Chiti, the head of Autodelta, in Italy. On one of the trips, I visited Zandvoort to watch one of these cars win a round of the European Touring Car Championship."

"A few years later the South African modified car regulations were changed and imported, limited production models such as the GTA were no longer eligible to contest the national championship.

The incredibly special GTA was then converted to GTAm specification with steel panels replacing all the light alloy ones that were part of the GTA's original specification. The GTAm was also distinguished by prominent wheel arches to take wider wheels and tyres. The standard engine in this model was a 2-litre that produced over 240 horsepower.

This was another successful car with Chatz at the wheel, including finishing second to a sports car in an international race at the Luanda track in Angola. It was then sold in Angola as the South African regulations had been changed and the GTAm was non-compliant.

Some of the GTAm components, such as the suspension were then fitted to a Berlina 2000 sedan and Chatz won the 1972 SA Saloon Car Championship in this car. This car was followed by a series of 2000 GTVs which enabled Chatz to take the 1975 title. He then switched to Alfetta GTVs with the 2-litre engine and took the 1979 and 1980 saloon car titles.

He ended his career racing Alfa Romeos when the Alfetta GTV received a V6 engine, first a 2.5 litre and later a unique 3.0 litre version was developed in South Africa as an international homologation special with only 212 made.

Arnold Chatz was not only a successful racing driver, but also a shrewd businessman. He began his successful motor retailing career with a Datsun dealership in Krugersdorp which was also awarded the Alfa Romeo franchise in 1962. This was the beginning of a long love affair between Arnold and Alfa.

Danny Alderton, who was also a prominent racing driver, held the Alfa Romeo franchise for large parts of Johannesburg and after he left the country suddenly in 1969 Arnold was offered Alderton's four outlets in Johannesburg. They were run alongside the main dealership in Craighall, which, at its peak, sold as many as 100 new Alfa Romeos a month.

However, Arnold was struck a low blow in 1985 when Alfa Romeo withdrew from South Africa. He was immediately offered several other franchises but decided to stay with Nissan (Datsun had been renamed) as he says he understood this franchise so well. The Nissan deal gave Arnold the Fiat Uno franchise too. It proved a popular small car. Alfa Romeo returned to South Africa in 2004 to make life for this dealership even better.

In the interim Arnold and his associates had sold the business to Super Group in 1996 and Arnold joined Basil Green in the Super Group automotive division.

Arnold retired in 2001 and is enjoying his retirement with time split between his homes in Johannesburg and Cape Town as well as enjoying a game lodge near Hoedspruit which he had built in 1990. He nevertheless keeps his finger on the pulse of the motor industry, local and international, and retains a great love for motorsport and Alfa Romeo!



Arnold pushing hard in the GTAm he shared with Eddie Keizan in the 1970 Nine Hour Race. They placed 16th.

WHAT'S HOT?

SPECIALISATION EASES SKILLS GAPS

by John Yoswick



The prospect of shaping more specialised roles in the workshop may not only ease the recruitment search but also improve productivity, some businesses have found.

Three shop owners in the United States recently discussed how they've moved to more specialised employee roles within their company. They opened the discussion by pointing out the obvious benefits of such specialisation in manufacturing, with very exacting tasks handled by specific people who become very skilled and productive at that work.

Barry Dorn of Dorn's Body & Paint in the state of Virginia says he believes that just as more shops are specialising in the repair of fewer makes and models, more specialised roles for employees will similarly boost expertise and productivity.

Dorn says with all the duties shops have traditionally given to estimators, for example, how high a priority will it be for them to mirror-match parts or handle parts returns and credits?

"They've got to take care of the customer. They've got to get the car going. They've got to get this supplement approved. They're not worried about parts," Dorn says, saying his shop, which repairs about 160 cars a month, has a dedicated parts team.

Similarly, he says, if a technician is also handling supplements, they will likely be focused primarily on body labour hours because in a flat-rate system, that's the basis of their compensation.

"You can't blame them," he says. "So that's why you have to have at least some level of a blueprinter or a repair planner that's with them who is also focused on parts and focused in on the procedures."

Having a detailer or someone other than an ADAS specialist do the pre-scanning of a vehicle isn't likely to ensure the shop has all the information it needs as repairs begin.

"That's the initialisation of you finding out what's wrong with that car," he says. "Yet most of the folks doing it in most shops are literally hitting 'print' and hoping that somebody, somewhere, will know what it means, yet it's often sitting in the file not being read. It has to be somebody who actually knows diagnostics so he can read it, and know what he's looking for, and more importantly, know when they scan something, depending on if it's an OEM tool or if it's an aftermarket tool, how far down into the modules is it going? Is your estimator going to know that? Probably not. That's not what they were trained for. I don't know that I can, because I was never trained to be a diagnostic service tech. The point is, if you hire folks for that role, they'll give you the information that you need to know what's wrong with that car prior to even writing the blueprint, instead of finding out five hours before the customer is supposed to come and pick the car up." Says Dorn

Starting in the body department

Kris Burton of Rosslyn Auto Body, also in Virginia, says he started the transition to more specialised roles in his shop's body department, developing assembly and disassembly teams and adding helpers and apprentices (three of the five are under age 19) to help keep structural technicians focused on just that, highly skilled work on the 78 cars the shop repairs per month, on average. That helps make it easier to bring in entry-level technicians to train.

"When you are able to narrow it down as far as the roles and responsibilities of that person, it's a lot easier to introduce younger people into it," Burton says. "People always say: There's not enough techs. We have a shortage. We need to have more people. But having a kind of a reduced role makes it a lot easier to bring people in. It's like we're creating our own farm system internally and can promote from within. I don't want to say that we don't face a technician shortage,

but it's not as drastic."

By segmenting out all the roles the typical estimator handles, Burton has been able to bring in customer service reps who just handle all the customer interaction, including explaining the process and selling the job.

"Some of the best custom service reps that I've found have been from restaurants," he says. "Lately it's been from even like vet's offices and doctor's offices and dentist's offices. They've dealt some with insurance companies to a different level, and kinda have an understanding of admin and processes."

His shop's 21 employees include a 19-year-old technician who specialises in ADAS and diagnostic work.

"He started with us when he was 16, and flies all around the country for training and loves it," Burton says. "The reality is that it's become a specialised role, and it's something that's attractive to a lot of young techs."

Only one structural tech needed

Like Burton, Michael Bradshaw of K&M Collision in the state of North Carolina says few people have all the different skills needed for the tasks many shops have traditionally required of estimators: technical knowledge, customer service and sales abilities, negotiating, collections, etc.

"Is there any one [task] that they're really going to be able to excel at if they're trying to manage all these others," Bradshaw says. "I know sometimes we look at things from a perspective of 'I can't afford to have somebody else to do this task or this role.' But if you look at the inefficiencies that are created, you really can't afford not to have somebody alleviate some of that stress. Think about it: We want somebody up front who can sell and is pleasant and nice to deal with. But a repair planner is usually somebody that's probably a little nerdy because it's super technical, and maybe isn't the best at interacting with the customer. Those two people are rarely the same personality type. But we wonder why we don't have success. Why are we missing parts? Why are we not closing on the opportunities that we have? Because we don't have the right individuals in the right place, and we're asking one individual to do way too much."

Bradshaw's shop has 31 employees, but just one structural technician (with a helper) who does all the welding and frame work – becoming very efficient at it because it's all he does – while others handle disassembly and reassembly, glass work, scanning and calibrations, etc.

Similarly in the paint shop, he says, having one person handling all colour matching helps that person become very efficient.

The parts team at Bradshaw's shop includes one person who does all the mirror-matching of parts and checking for any damage to those parts; another ensures all the invoices are received, that discounts are correct, that parts price updates are applied to the estimate, and returns and credits happen.

"We're processing about a 100 vehicles a month," Bradshaw says. "At one time we had one individual doing all those (parts-related) tasks. He worked for us about a year-and-a-half and then resigned. He resigned because he couldn't deal with the stress. It was hard for him to have the time to mirror-match because he was handling all the communication with the dealers and follow-up on back-ordered parts and all that. After we hired an individual dedicated to doing all the mirror-matching, I was able to bring back that parts manager, and he's as happy as can be now. And he's also excellent at the accounting side of things."



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OPINION PIECE

IS COSTLY TRAINING A BAD DEAL FOR SHOP OWNERS?



Training is an exceptionally important part of any repair shop and should always be taken seriously. That said however, a great return on investment should always be part of this package as your artisans take time out to train, leaving you without your skilled workers for days and there is no help in work directive from OEMs, despite doing their training to stay approved members of the network.

Vehicle makers in the last three decades have, because of ever changing global legislation, been forced to adapt the multiple use of bake hardened metals to try and make the vehicles lighter and handle impacts better. These metals are now in excess of 1 500 grades of torsional strengths in common use across all the new vehicle structures and developed by the ULSAB convention. Coupled to these are another 400 or so grades of vehicle aluminium panel strengths found in new cars being repaired every day in local body shops. Recently there has also been an addition of carbon fibre options as well, making repair a working nightmare.

Recently Stellantis released their training requirements for their body shop network. Their courses are charged at R3500 per course and there are 12 mandatory training courses. If you do the maths quickly, for all 12 courses, that's a cost of R42 000 per person. If you factor in the hourly wage of an average R270 an hour on top of this cost, plus the fact that work will slowdown in your shop, it gains momentum in cost for the body shop owner.

In this case, theoretical training can be completed online, and Stellantis provide practical hands-on training at their facility across their six vehicle brands. What may not have been considered is the fact that

these technicians already know 90% of what they are being taught having worked on various makes and models for many years. Surely there should be an "add onto what you already know" type of style to streamline these courses to be less time intrusive and truly add value to the end-user. If an artisan wasn't trained on newer technologies such as ADAS, radar etc, then why not offer these courses for the benefit of all?

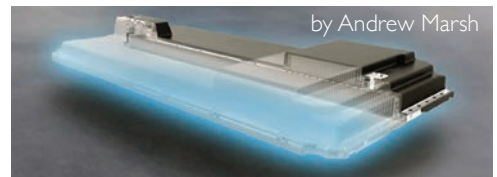
There is a shrinking number of vehicles being sold across the Stellantis stable at present, and with just one vehicle a month on average showing up at very large body shop (approximately 300 cars repaired a month) we surveyed to see the rate of return across a 12-month period, it's difficult to justify the money and time to be spent on training.

They are not the only OEM with great demands on time and money from the collision repair network for training, equipment and more. There is indeed a ton of investment required across the board from retaining approval from the manufacturer. If the body shop is investing in the correct equipment, achieving audits and keeping the brand's customers happy (the most important goal at the end of the day!), surely, they should be supported in training – whether online or in quick courses along the way by the OEM, who want these requirements met.

The perception on the receiving end may be that the OEM is seeking to profit from the body shop instead of working as partners to achieve safe and correct repair for their shared customers.

WHAT'S HOT?

TRANSITION TO BATTERY POWER



There is quite a race developing to build electric powered vehicles that can 're-fuel' in the same time span as petrol- or diesel-powered vehicles. The public seem to be persuaded that consideration of lease or purchasing a new battery electric vehicle depends on how far it can go on one full charge, and how long it takes to replace the stored energy.

Watering the garden – feeding the BEV

Often during dryer spells a garden may need to be watered – so it better to provide a deluge or a fine, steady spray? For plants the answer is a slower rate of delivery, allowing water to be retained in the soil instead of running off the surface and draining away. Similarly, to have a hose 1 m in diameter would certainly deliver the water, but the domestic supply system is built around far smaller diameters.

Large-scale adoption of battery electric vehicles is for most people, new – the last time this happened, on a much, much smaller scale, was during the early years of the internal combustion engine in the early 1900s. This brings major problems:

- Off street parking, with many recent developments featuring no parking or parking remote from the dwellings, makes provision of charging even harder.
- Commercial recharge points – piloted in everything from adapted street lights to

dedicated clusters – has on the whole proved to be reliable with many charge stations out of action for multiple reasons including inability to accept payments.

- The local power supply may not have the capability to have multiple chargers added without system upgrades including associated groundworks.

In effect, many districts do not have the capability to provide commercial or private charge points. While newer residential developments have included significant capability, they link up to the surrounding – often inadequate – network.

'Frying tonight'

A battery stores energy rather well, but does not like to add or take away energy quickly. The process requires electrons to move through the electrolyte from one pole to another, a process that takes time. The more this is speeded up, the greater the risk of deposit build-up on the anode and cathode. Once those deposits get close enough, the energy will arc between them.

Frequent 'rapid' charging, akin to using a 1 m diameter pipe to water a small garden, does shorten the time to 'recharge' the battery but it should only be done a handful of times in the entire life of a vehicle, especially with Li-Ion batteries.

If 'rapid' charging is used to frequently the ability of the battery to store energy will reduce, and ultimately could fail

catastrophically. In the case Li-Ion this will endanger life.

Consider if, through no fault at all of the BEV, the vehicle does go up in smoke – where will you be? The thermal runaway, again, even if not caused by the battery, produces large volumes of highly toxic gasses and hydrogen in a matter of seconds. We no know the classic car parking space alongside a house wall with no doors or windows does work – which does not help anyone with an apartment on the 3rd floor, for example.

Synchronicity

On effect the automotive manufacturers have built BEVs that already are ahead of what commonly available chargers can deliver. Apart from the price differential of new BEVs compared to internal combustion engine powertrains, charging is a growing problem. It is a major block to BEV adoption in urban and inner-city locations.

It's almost as if the 'best in class' 22 per cent energy density of a Li-Ion battery compared to a litre of petrol or diesel is really not the main issue, because the bigger issue is getting energy into the battery. So, the next time you see a manufacturer proclaiming significant recharging in a matter of minutes – ask if you have a space next to your dwelling with significant electrical supply on hand to utilise this stunning ability. No? It's a bit like owning a Lamborghini but only ever driving on streets with 20 mph speed limits. A bit pointless.



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SILVER PARTNERS



HYUNDAI GRAND i10 AC3

- Introduced world-wide in 2020, facelifted in 2023.
- The 'sister' car is the third generation Kia Picanto JA, introduced world-wide in 2019.
- Powertrains include petrol three-cylinder engine for the five door with manual transmission, and 1.2 litre four-cylinder engine for the five door auto as well as the manual transmission sedan.
- International versions include a windscreen mounted ADAS camera, which takes care of adaptive headlight dip, cruise control, autobrake for vehicles / pedestrians / cyclists, and road sign recognition. This is presently not required for South Africa.

Power electric adjustable door mirrors. Power fold on Executive trim.

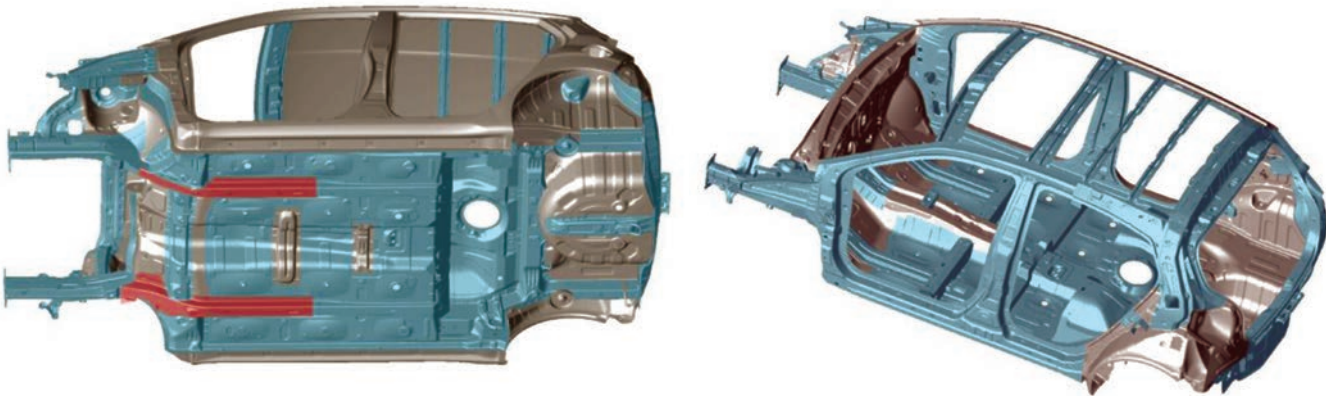
Facelift: New front bumper and headlights. LED day-time running lights on Executive trim.

Reversing camera, static calibration, standard on all trims. Five door – on the tailgate. Sedan – on the rear bumper.

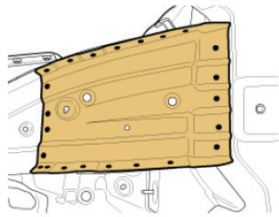
Ultrasonic sensor x2, standard on all trims.

Facelift: New rear bumper, fixed tail lights. 5 door – new tailgate exterior trim. Sedan – new boot lid exterior trim.

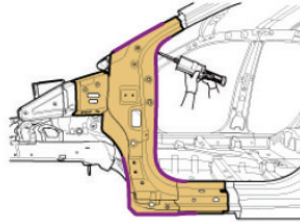
Mild steel
High strength steel
Ultra high strength steel (Hot stamping)



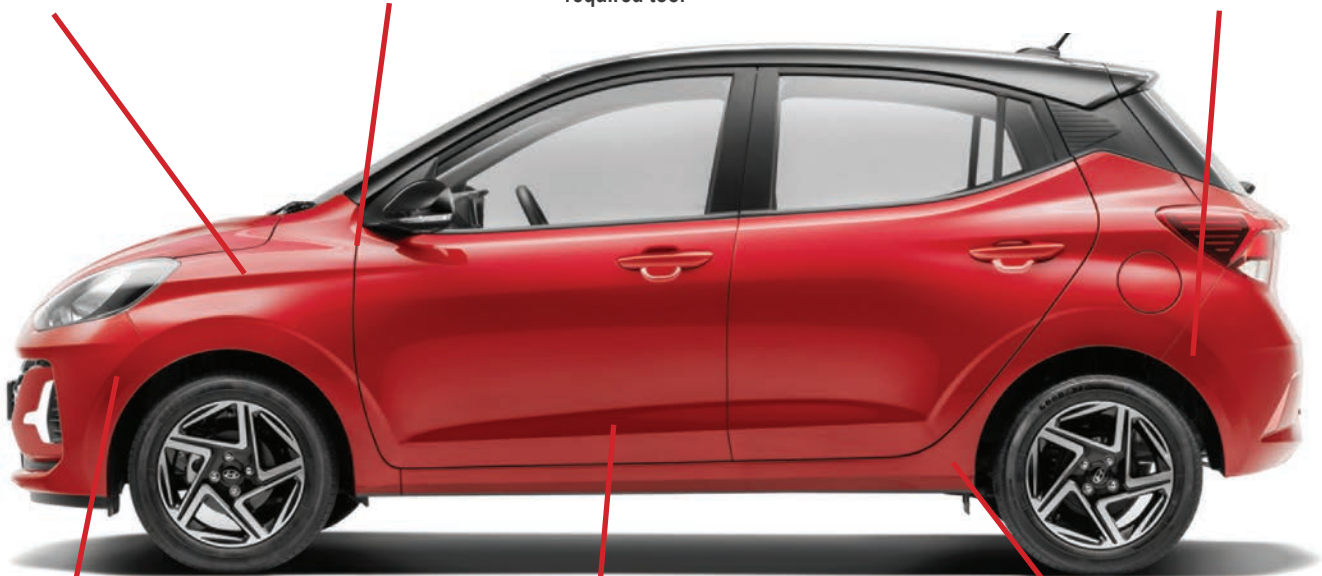
Front: Upper longitudinal and strut tower – 1 unit
Closing panel bridges to the A pillar.



A pillar: Only lower section can
be replaced. Requires removal of
bridge panel – structural bonding
required too.



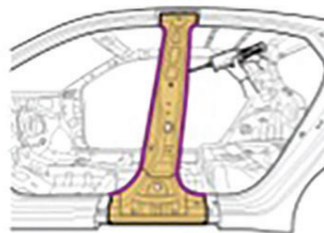
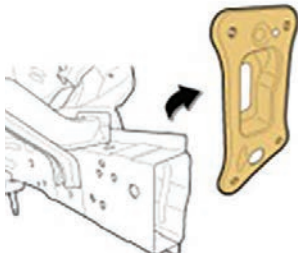
Rear chassis leg section –
requires boot floor to be removed,
no short section available.



Front: Chassis leg – no section. End
plate can be replaced.



B pillar: Reinforcement has to be
replaced completely – no section.
Structural bonding required.



Sill: There is no document
for this.
Remove upper longitudinal
brace.
Remove outer sill.
Remove A pillar
reinforcement section.
Remove B pillar
reinforcement.
Refer to inner rear quarter
panel for rear sill joint.
No sections possible.



Actual refinishing paint calculated costs on Mazda Soul Crystal Red as well as other 3-stage pearls reveal an alarming under recovery in paint allowances for all to see.

REFINISH ACCURACY

MAJOR REPAIR ESTIMATE LOSSES CALCULATED BY PAINTWIZZ FOR THREE-STAGE PEARLS

It is a whole new ball game on material utilisation when refinishing estimated repair costs come under the microscope with PaintWizz for colour repairs. This system has been developed by veteran industry experts who were driven by the belief that repairers should be fairly compensated for every job in the repair cycle.

The programme is user-friendly and delivers an online answer that eliminates all guess work in paint repair estimation. This revolutionary tool introduces a new era of accuracy providing colour specific calculations for each vehicle. It accounts for the actual costs of the colour formulation as well as labour, sundry items, and preparation costs.

Paint shops using PaintWizz are provided with detailed costs and mix volumes for as little as R25 per quote. Overlooking the cost of the colour during the estimation process can result in severe underquoting.

PaintWizz is colour specific, avoiding mistakes in identification of multi-stage applications, using actual toner costs.

Collision Repairers invest millions annually in paint purchases. However, many overlook the soaring costs of paint toners. When you examine paint purchase invoices, you'll notice significant price differences among toners. Accurate paint cost calculation requires

precise colour formulations and accurate toner prices for each formulation. The size of a panel, like a bonnet, can vary significantly across different models, affecting paint volume needs.

At PaintWizz, they calculate costs based on the exact paint colour's "Ready For Use (RFU)" price in the spray gun and panel sizes specific to each model. This method ensures accuracy; anything else is simply guesswork. Visit paintwizz.com for easy registration and immediate access to over 480 popular vehicle models that are continuously updated to include the latest introductions to the market. PaintWizz helps streamline your quoting process to maximise accuracy and

consistency for your business.

In this case study we look at the price of different Mazda colours, including Soul Red Crystal, a three-stage pearl that reveals the alarming differential in colour toner costs.

When comparing the quotation values on a typical front smash on a Mazda CX-5 for various colours, it is obvious that these differences are too big to ignore, but many insurers refuse to use the functionality provided in Audatex to mark-up the paint material component.

We can debate labour times and how different systems calculate materials, but the price variation between different colours is an undeniable fact.



Audatex

2-Coat Uni/Metallic
2-Coat Mica/Pearl
3-Coat Mica/Pearl
4-Coat Mica/Pearl

PaintWizz

47C Polymetal Grey (2-Coat Metallic)
25D Snowflake White (3-Coat Pearl)
46G Machine Grey (3-Coat Pearl)
46V Soul Red Crystal (3-Coat Pearl)

Labour @R400 p/h

R5 360
R5 360
R6 440
R7 480

Materials

R12 751
R13 466
R15 386
R17 731

Total

R18 111
R18 826
R21 826
R25 211

R8 435
R9 664
R9 664
R9 864

R10 448
R16 782
R21 082
R25 098

R18 883
R26 446
R30 746
R34 962

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NEW PRODUCTS



LUXOR PAINTS LAUNCH FIREFLY POLISHING RANGE

Luxor Paints have launched the Firefly range - a top-performing polishing system, suitable for both machine and hand application. Its refined formula significantly reduces process time in final finish operations. Firefly is compatible with a wide variety of buffing mops, including hard, medium, and soft types, as well as double-sided lambswool polishing heads.

For more information contact Luxor Paints Head Office on +27 (0)11 397 6622.

RAPTOR HEAT ENGINE ENAMEL

RAPTOR Engine Enamel contains ceramic resins that resist temperatures up to 300°C and is five times tougher than ordinary paints to provide superior protection from heat, oil and other automotive fluids. It is a professional quality engine enamel, ideal for use on engine blocks, engine accessories and other surfaces in the engine compartment.

It's easy to use and dries fast to give an attractive, smooth finish with excellent adhesion that will not blister, flake, crack or peel. Suitable for use on all types of primed metals (steel, aluminium and alloys). It also boasts excellent adhesion with superior corrosion resistance.

For more information contact Barkocel +27 (0)11 552 8596 or visit www.raptorcoating.co.za



TORK CRAFT INSULATED VDE HAND TOOL SET

The 14-Piece Electrician's Insulated VDE Hand Tool Set is a collection of essential tools designed for safe and effective electrical work. The VDE (Verband Deutscher Elektrotechniker) standard ensures that these tools are rigorously tested and certified to withstand high voltages, protecting the user from electrical shock. They are lightweight and durable with a toll pouch for easy storage. Precision engineered blade tips for accurate fitment with insulated blades and body for safety. Tork Craft Insulated VDE Hand Tool set Call Vermont Sales for a specialist Dealer near you on +27 (0)11 314 7711 or visit www.vermontsales.co.za.



STANDOX FAST CURE LOW ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

The improved Standox Xtreme FCLE System delivers all the benefits refinishers have come to expect, and more, including saving up to 50% of gas and up to 48% on electricity because of low bake or air drying. The new FCLE System lets body shops find the perfect balance between speed and low energy consumption without compromising appearance. Contact your nearest Standox distributor or visit www.standox.com/za/en_ZA.html



TELWIN BATTERY PULLER CORDLESS SPOT WELDER

Lithium battery spotter best suitable for all straightening processes of steel sheets. Free of cables, handy and powerful it is the indispensable tool for those who want to increase the efficiency of bodywork with a significant saving in time and costs.

The elegant and ergonomic design makes it very easy to handle, ensuring a secure grip in all working positions. The on-board digital control, allows you to synergistically vary the welding parameters based on the type of work carried out. Equipped with an interchangeable and rechargeable LiPo4 lithium battery, it guarantees continuity in processing thanks to an almost infinite autonomy. Hurricane Equipment can be reached at jhbsales@hurricaneauto.co.za or call Stuart on 072 454 2523.

DEBEER INTRODUCES THE AIR-DRY 8-945 SUPER SURFACER DTM

The new air-dry Super Surfacers Direct To Metal (DTM) is the perfect solution for all kinds of body shop looking to speed up production and take their business to the next level. This innovative direct to metal surfacer removes the need for an etching primer, saving application time of 25-30 minutes. And with a dry to sand time of just 30-60 minutes, users enjoy faster throughput every time.

As well as boosting productivity, the Super Surfacers DTM also reduces labour, cleaning and materials costs. Plus, with no need to use the spray booth for baking, users can cut their energy costs too, reducing their carbon footprint. The Super Surfacers DTM comes in three shades – grey, black and white – with the black and white enabling body shops to create six different shades of grey. It is available in both 1L and 3L packaging.

For more information on how the 8-945 Super Surfacers DTM can help body shops transform their operations, please visit www.de-beer.com.





To start off, the day was bliss as the Boss was driving along the historic Main Reef Road in his new BMW. He and his mate, tourist Commander Kettle were touring historic gold mines that now, more often than not, lie in ruin as their owner's transferred all the wealth to the stock market in London, while everything else took a back seat.

Rumbling from Krugersdorp to Springs takes a bit of time and by now with all the commemorative brass plaques removed to some local scrap metal merchant, the history was invisible to the eye. It would be wishful thinking to see Johannesburg's history maintained.

The two old codgers grumbled on and on as they moved through the derelict remains of 100 years of heritage, in an uncanny number of once famous mineshafts. They rummaged through the famous mines like Durban Deep, Crown Mines, the cabbage patch in Fordsburg and City Deep which took up most of the glorious Saturday weather. By about four in the afternoon the Boss got a real burst of imagination in his over-active life by wanting to take the new BMW 5 Series right into the middle of the squatter camp at the end of Victoria Street in Germiston.

Why? Well, he wanted to pop a few pictures off on his expensive camera on the plight of poverty-stricken squatters viewed against the other life of the sophisticated modern world, that being the new car he was driving around in.

He said he knew a secret place smack in the middle of a bunch of homeless and vagrant people. When they stopped the vehicle, instantly they knew they had not exactly been invited. Commander Kettle feared the worst as a quiet but inquisitive bunch of locals gathered around the pristine 5 Series for a look-see.

As the quick photoshoot was underway the Boss really excelled himself by locking the keys in the boot and the car became deadlocked.

Both of them became visibly upset and perplexed at the developing

situation of evening looking in the dead centre of a squatter camp. Being dressed in short pants and highly visible in the wrong place it was all turning into a nightmare for the two old men.

With just one inch of sunroof open, a glimmer of hope was however in sight when out of the blue one of the young lads said they would go and get Amos to open it up. He was their local car thief and could get any car open.

Stepping into the dark shack that Amos called home, the Boss made a plea for help and Amos came out. Armed with wire and other tools of the trade to do his thing he said he could take out the rear door window but that he would work with the wire to unlock the door instead. That said, within 30 seconds the car was open, and keys retrieved from the boot. It took a R50 note to smooth things out and the team were once again mobile and leaving behind the prospect of a night in the squatter camp once and for all.

As they came to the edge of the informal settlement a couple of cops were on duty under a tall blue gum tree. They stepped out and stopped the car. "Have you just been in that madhouse of a place?" The sergeant asked them both. "Well, we were perusing a photo opportunity," said the Boss. The sergeant quickly replied, "You must be barking mad to go in there with a new car, we don't go in there, ever. So, you are lucky you didn't get robbed, raped, or short-changed in anyway."

Then Commander Kettle laughed out loud saying the locals had been most helpful and hospitable to them and helped them on their way as they were out of touring for the day. Continuing the trip with Willie Nelson's track blaring out "On The Road Again," the Boss turned to Commander Kettle and said with a touch of relief in his voice, "Yes, but only just."



Enjoy the recognition you deserve

The Collision Repairers Association (CRA) has evolved as an organisation with passion, understanding and the will to provide results to our esteemed members from the basis of being a voice to the collision repair industry. We employ consultants and are associated with people suitably qualified in all aspects of collision repair and related business management skills with high integrity and willing to offer their support to ensuring the success of your facilities.

Our objectives are issues the proactive body shop owner does not really have the time to concentrate on to ensure the optimisation of their business. As with any Association annual membership fees are payable to cover administration costs and our membership is based on grading status. We provide an on-line E Procure business data profile of members to support recognition for independent role players in every area of activity in the collision repair industry.

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