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REFINISHER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

Edition 242

November - December 2025

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November - December 2025



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EDITORIAL

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS?



Claire Macfie
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As this magazine hurtles towards its 250th edition, the ramifications of constant change are all around us in the collision repair trade. Experts are openly predicting more changes inside the body repair industry in the next three years than in the previous decade. The tsunami of rapid technology advancement has reached mind boggling levels of believability and can be quite disheartening at times.

Body shop owners, as you can imagine, are in a way quite puffed out with the need to constantly work harder and the search to employ the right people to obtain the necessary skills levels that are needed to keep up with repair. There are still only 24 hours in a day and 365 (and a quarter) days a year but keeping up is a tough ask.

The stress of modern living is being compounded in the business by a pure competition situation, where some operators continue to operate at loss making levels of sustainability. It is quite clear that the oversupply of collision repair shops can't be sustained as driver assistance technology drops the number of accidents and the uninsured market grows.

This became very apparent at the recent Automechanika Johannesburg exhibition held at Gallagher Convention Centre. The huge contingent of Chinese companies and their raft of product array was quite intimidating. However, this is also a market in distress with major oversupply of vehicles, the housing market falling and much more.

The vehicle of tomorrow is mutating before your very eyes with the advent of the "single use" car; multiple new construction steels, the continuation of composite metals being built into one panel skin and headlights that have replacement values over R80 000. That will be enough to condemn a vehicle into the "uneconomical to repair" level in this industry with consummate ease. It's a mind blow!

Statistics in the USA and Europe show a clear trend of older aged shop owners just simply conking in and closing their factory doors against the avalanche of change knocking on the gates. The world, and everything in it, never stands still, and the collision repair industry is absolute testimony to these words.

Fortunately, wherever there are problems, there is opportunity. In good old tenacious South African speak, "n Boer maak 'n plan"! With a growing aging car parc in SA and Africa, and parts supply shrinking from 10 years, to five and downwards, there is certainly a gap in the market to begin to produce such items for ours and African markets.

Understanding the importance of our country and the springboard that it is into Africa is key. The developed markets know it, but the full reality of this hasn't dawned on us yet and we need to play catch-up. It's time to employ the energy that is put into such a negative space and turn it around in productivity.

New markets are beginning to develop in the East where agreements are being made for local supply. We are not a nation of copying and vast manufacturing, but one of innovation and people who work hard and understand Ubuntu – I am, because of who we are together. Our government leaders have forgotten this in their greed, but they are only a small percentage of our populous, and we need to remind ourselves of our heart and how amazing we truly are!

Within the collision repair industry, in your company and at home, start to rekindle a "can do" attitude, with a sprinkling of integrity, honesty and pride. Be the salmon that swims against the tide of corruption, the spirit of entitlement and victim mentality that has held us to ransom for way too long.

Thank you, and have a Blessed Christmas

From the team at *Automotive Refinisher*, we would like to say a huge thank you to all our magazine contributors. Every issue has such great "read me" quality, and it's all down to you. For 40 years we have enjoyed great relationships with our readers, advertisers and journalists and we just wanted to take time out to say that we are nothing without you.

Have a restful break wherever you find yourselves. Enjoy the journey, the destination, but most of all take time to refresh. The year has been intense to say the least and things don't look to be slowing down on that front any time soon. So have a cold sip of something delicious, toast in the New Year and be ready for another eventful lap around the sun!



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HYUNDAI HARP 2025

The Hyundai's 2025 Hyundai Approved Repair Programme (HARP) hosted a Gauteng roadshow to mark another strong year in South Africa's collision repair aftermarket. The event gathered representatives from the 98 approved repair centres in Johannesburg, with Gauteng, KZN, and Western Cape accounting for over 73% of the national network. This year, 25 new repairers joined the programme. A major highlight was the significant boost in parts availability, supported by improved logistics from India. Parts Director Samuel Matlhola reported a 90% first-pick rate on body shop orders through Hyundai's nationwide PDC centres, reflecting the company's commitment to supporting its growing network.

Audit results by AutoMX Data flagged some shops for tax and MIBCO issues, but Hyundai emphasised progress under the Save-A-Car programme and updated service level agreements. Expanded national training initiatives and new learning modules were also announced. Attendees raised concerns about insurance payout trends and repair efficiency. The event concluded with the unveiling of a new TV campaign promoting approved Hyundai repairs for vehicles both in and out of warranty.



VOLKSWAGEN KARIEGA CELEBRATES PRODUCTION OF 500 000th POLO

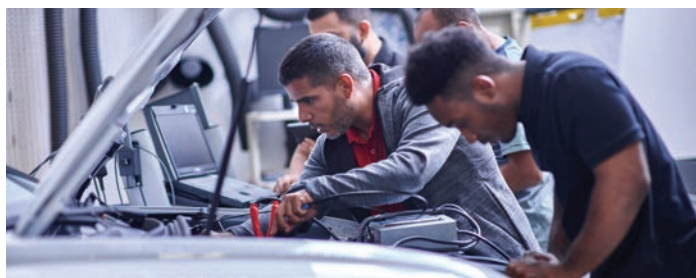
Volkswagen Group Africa is celebrating a major milestone at its Kariega plant in the Eastern Cape, with the 500 000th facelifted Polo rolling off the production line. The landmark vehicle, a Kings Red Polo, is headed for Germany, highlighting the plant's key role in global exports.

Despite mounting challenges facing South Africa's auto industry – including cheaper imports, steel supply issues, and the shift to New Energy Vehicles – VW's Kariega facility remains a manufacturing powerhouse. It has been producing the Polo since 1996 and, since July 2024, has served as the sole exporter of the model to Europe and Asia-Pacific.

Of the half-million facelifted Polos built since 2021, over 452 000 were destined for export, with nearly 48,000 sold locally. In total, Kariega has produced nearly 2 million Polos in 29 years.

The Polo was South Africa's most exported car in 2024 and scooped top honours at the Naamsa Accelerator Awards.

VW's production director Ulrich Schwabe praised the team behind the success, calling the Polo a cornerstone of both the company's and the country's export achievements.



AUTO INDUSTRY SET TO DEVELOP AN EV SPECIFIC TRAINING QUALIFICATION

South Africa's automotive industry is creating a nationally recognised Electromobility Occupational Skills Programme to train technicians in servicing and maintaining electric and hybrid vehicles. Led by merSETA, in collaboration with the Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI) and other stakeholders, the programme aims to formalise EV-related skills development and align national training frameworks with the global transition to electromobility.

The qualification development process, which began in May, involves several stages – scoping, quality partner appointment, facilitator procurement, curriculum design by expert practitioners, and registration – before implementation. According to merSETA acting CEO Naphtaly Mokgotsane, the initiative is a long-overdue step toward strengthening South Africa's technical capabilities in the evolving vehicle market.

RMI training director Louis van Huyssteen stresses that trained technicians are crucial for handling battery systems, diagnostics, and safety protocols, warning that unqualified EV work poses serious risks. Despite South Africa's strong legislative framework for skills development, practical application remains a challenge.

By 2024, over 90 hybrid, plug-in hybrid, and electric models across 20 brands were available locally, with more models entering the market in 2025. The new qualification will likely be integrated into technical and vocational training colleges, enhancing employability and supporting South Africa's Just Energy Transition. RMI and merSETA plan to invite industry participation soon.



LEGO SA's NEW CAR MERCEDES AMG F1 W14

LEGO South Africa has unveiled a life-size LEGO® Technic Mercedes-AMG F1 W14 E Performance car, marking the largest LEGO® build ever brought into the country.

Unveiled at the Mercedes-Benz Experience Centre at Zwartkops Raceway, this jaw-dropping replica built from 192 937 LEGO bricks, weighing 913kg, and measuring 5.1m in length is a stunning fusion of engineering, design, and play. It's a celebration of creativity and innovation, brought to life through a collaboration between LEGO® South Africa and Mercedes-Benz.

BUILDING A FUTURE

TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICS IN THE AUTO BODY REPAIR INDUSTRY



Busi Maile

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Swift Auto Body Repair

Not so long ago, questionable practises in the auto body repair industry could remain hidden behind workshop doors. Today, those doors have been thrown wide open by technology, social media, and instant access to information.

Every decision, every repair, and every customer interaction has the potential to surface, and when it does, your reputation can either be reinforced or destroyed.

The new reality

The automotive value chain; insurers, OEMs, parts suppliers, and customers, is highly interconnected. Everybody talks. Staff talk. And sometimes, the most unexpected whistleblowers are right inside your shop.

Take this example: A large repair shop recently came under scrutiny when a junior employee emailed stakeholders alleging that shortcuts had been taken on certain repairs. Was the claim true? Or was it vindictive? The truth almost didn't matter. The fact that the email reached decision-makers was enough to spark reputational damage.

This highlights a growing risk: you're not only protecting yourself from regulatory, insurer or OEM audits and reviews, but also from the unscrupulous actions of disgruntled staff, competitors, or even customers who may act out of malice rather than fact.

Research by Deloitte (2023) shows that 74% of reputational crises in the automotive sector are triggered by internal sources which includes whistleblowers, staff leaks, or mishandled customer complaints, not external investigations. In other words, the threats often come from within.

Why transparency and ethics are now non-negotiable

Information travels fast. A single photo, WhatsApp voice note, or social media post can circulate across the industry in minutes.

The industry value chain is constantly watching and customer expectations have changed. Today's customer is informed, connected, and vocal. They will not hesitate to escalate concerns publicly.

Operating transparently shields you from the damage caused by false accusations or vindictive claims. If your records are in order, you can stand firm.

Legal safeguards for South African MBRs

While you cannot stop employees from speaking, you can legally curtail harmful leaks and protect sensitive business information:

- Employment contracts & NDAs include confidentiality clauses in employment agreements that extend beyond employment, covering OEM data, pricing, insurer agreements, and repair methodologies.
- Social media and communication policies should clearly outline what employees may and may not share about the business, particularly on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or TikTok.
- Disciplinary procedures need to align your code of conduct with the labour relations act to ensure fair but firm disciplinary action against malicious falsehoods or breaches of trust.
- Access control should restrict sensitive information to "need-to-know" employees and track digital access for accountability.
- Internal grievance channels should provide safe ways for staff to raise concerns internally (HR desk, anonymous feedback line) so they don't feel pushed to air issues externally.

How to keep what's inside, inside

- Staff training – regularly remind your team of confidentiality obligations and why protecting workshop processes protects jobs.
- Culture of trust – promote loyalty through fair treatment, recognition, and opportunities for growth. A valued team is less likely to sabotage.

- Incentives for integrity – link bonuses or recognition to compliance and ethical behaviour.

Damage control when something leaks

Leaks are sometimes inevitable. What matters is your response.

- Verify facts quickly - investigate whether the claim is valid or malicious.
- Take control of the narrative - communicate proactively with insurers, OEMs, and customers before speculation spreads.
- Rely on documentation - photos, repair notes, and compliance logs can disprove false claims instantly.
- Engage legal remedies - in cases of defamation or malicious intent, seek advice on disciplinary action or civil remedies.
- Learn and adapt - after each incident, refine policies and training to close gaps.

Transparency as a strategic advantage

Operating transparently and ethically isn't just about compliance, it's a competitive advantage. Shops that are open about their processes, pricing, and repair standards build trust with their stakeholders.

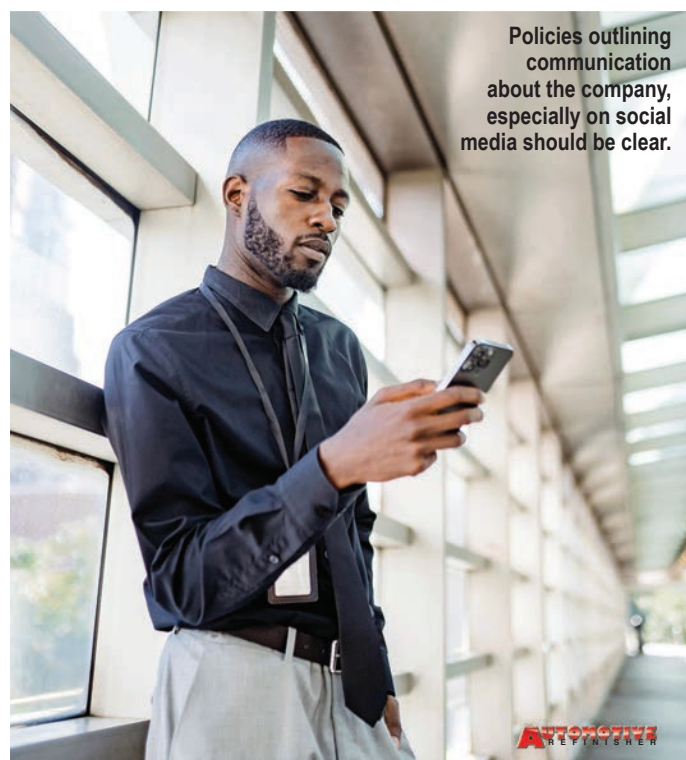
That credibility becomes a powerful currency. In an industry where work allocation is often based on trust and proven quality, transparency can secure repeat business and protect long-term partnerships.

Final word

Here's the truth: in today's environment, you cannot hide poor ethics for long. Whether through audits, staff leaks, or digital exposure, unethical practises eventually surface.

Operate with integrity, and you build a brand that insurers, OEMs and customers want to work with.

Note: This article provides general advice. MBRs are strongly encouraged to consult labour lawyers, HR professionals, and industry associations to ensure their employment contracts, disciplinary procedures, and confidentiality policies are both legally compliant and enforceable.



Policies outlining communication about the company, especially on social media should be clear.

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Santam's broader drive to sharpen customer satisfaction and bolster policyholder retention is taking shape.

COLLABORATION

THE FUTURE ROAD AHEAD FOR COLLISION PROCESS PARTNERSHIP

In recent weeks, Santam's review of its motor book has ignited robust debate among collision repair professionals working under the current service level agreements. This exercise, which looks closely at performance, compliance, and equipment standards, forms part of Santam's broader drive to sharpen customer satisfaction and bolster policyholder retention.

At the core of any insurance undertaking lies a simple principle: indemnify the policyholder against loss. Yet, in today's collision repair environment, that principle is far from simple. Legislative obligations under the Financial Sector Charter demand fairness, while consumer expectations - especially around advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and OEM specifications - are climbing higher than ever. Repairers are finding themselves under growing pressure to deliver "right first time" results, with zero compromise on safety or quality.

For Santam, this means collaboration is no longer optional - it's essential. The insurer's consultative approach with crash repairers is aimed at tackling the dual challenge of cost management and the rising technical complexity of modern vehicles. Any misstep - whether in ADAS calibration or repair methodology - risks not only higher claims costs but also longer turnaround times and dissatisfied customers.

As South Africa's leading short-term insurer, Santam acknowledges that its future strength depends on forging stronger working relationships with repairers. The demands of new vehicle technology require nothing less. Repair quality, turnaround speed, and policyholder safety are interlinked, and compromise on any of these fronts is simply not an option.

The reality is clear: motor insurance has become a moving target. Technology is advancing at a pace that affects every corner of the repair cycle, from assessment to final delivery. For insurers, helping consumers through stressful claims moments is paramount, but so too is ensuring that the repair trade remains sustainable in the long run. Without viable, technically capable repair partners, the system fails.

This review of Santam's collision repair partnerships signals a recognition that the rules of the game have changed. Repairers and insurers alike must step up to the new reality of complex vehicles, higher customer expectations, and stricter compliance demands. Done right, this can open the road to a more equitable future for all stakeholders in South Africa's collision repair aftermarket.

The regulatory changes from the Competition Commission, requires a move away from evergreen contracts and introduces a cyclical tender process to ensure fair market access. In line with this, Santam has issued and is busy with several tenders currently and planned for the next couple of years, to progressively work through its vendor base.





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TECNOLOGIA NUOVA DI VERNICIATURA

Ford South Africa has expanded its next-generation Everest line-up from two to six models, broadening its appeal across a wider range of buyers. We were fortunate to get behind the wheel of the Everest XLT 4x4 version, also available in 4x2. Our drive showed it offers everything you could need from a vehicle in South Africa. Though the most affordable in the range, the XLT comes fully loaded with features. A mix of comfort, tech, performance, and safety makes Ford's Everest XLT a compelling option for families or adventurers who don't want to compromise on quality.

Powering the Everest XLT is a very capable 2.0-litre Bi-Turbo diesel, delivering 154 kW and 500 Nm. The performance is impressive considering the Everest weighs just over three tonnes. You understand why Ford named it after one of the world's tallest mountains – it lives up to its name in sheer size!

All that power is fed through a smooth 10-speed automatic transmission, offering quick power delivery and decent fuel efficiency – we averaged a comfortable 10.3l/100 km. While we didn't test the 3.5T towing rating, the engine performed admirably whether on city streets or off-road, delivering a responsive and enjoyable driving experience.

From the outside, the Everest XLT looks imposing thanks to its bold proportions, 18-inch alloy rims, and chunky all-road tyres. Chrome accents and colour-coded mirrors and door-handles add a classy feel. C-Clamp LED daytime lights bring a touch of sophistication, while its high clearance gives it strong road presence.

Inside, the XLT includes partial leather trim for all seven seats, and eight-way power adjustment for the front seats. Our test unit had optional full leather, likely the only extra you'd ever need. A 12-inch portrait touchscreen running Ford's SYNC 4A infotainment system dominates the dashboard. Unlike rivals, Ford wisely keeps

physical buttons for core functions like climate control, making operation simpler while driving. Connectivity is excellent, with standard Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, USB-A/C ports, and 12V sockets for all passengers.

The Everest XLT 4x4 features a part-time electronic 4WD system with selectable 2H, 4H, and 4L modes, plus a rear diff lock for rougher terrain. It shares six selectable drive modes with high-spec models like the Wildtrak and Platinum, making it very capable off-road. Its suspension is equally impressive, easily smoothing out rugged terrain.

Ford has loaded the XLT with a host of advanced safety features. These include dual front, side, and curtain airbags, Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Pre-Collision Assist with Forward Collision Warning and Auto Emergency Braking, Lane Keeping System with Road Edge Detection, Blind Spot Monitoring with Cross Traffic Alert and Trailer Coverage, Reverse Brake Assist, Hill Launch Assist, Hill Descent Control (4x4 only), and front/rear parking sensors with a rearview camera. All of this makes the XLT one of the safest in its class – ideal for school runs or weekend escapes.

Practical features include smart keyless entry (which can be disabled) and a powered tailgate – great for shopping trips. The flexible seating configuration offers excellent utility, from carrying seven passengers to maximising cargo space.

The Ford Everest XLT truly delivers everything you'd need in a vehicle with no boundaries – on or off-road. It blends performance, safety, premium features, and rugged capability into one package, priced at R1 017 000 with Ford's six-year/90 000km Optional Service Plan. Whether you go for the 4x2 or choose the 4x4 for more adventure, the XLT is a smart, feature-packed entry into the Next-Gen Everest line-up.





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CRA REPORT

HURDLES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD IN COLLISION REPAIR

story by Ian Groat, pics by Ian and Jay Groat

The CRA Conference, held at Automechanika Johannesburg at the Gallagher Conference Centre in Midrand, featured an impressive line-up of industry movers and shakers who gathered to discuss key changes that lie ahead in the business of collision repair. Over 160 delegates attended from insurers through to service providers for the collision repair industry as a whole and it was the best event to date.

Keynote speaker, and regular *Automotive Refinisher* contributor Andrew Marsh, delivered an extended technical overview of innovations in both car manufacturing and repair trends anticipated in the coming decade.

Among these were the emergence of the disposable "single use" five-thousand-dollar Chinese car - already seen on global roads - as well as BMW's innovative ultra-thin electrical wiring harnesses. With up to 600 metres of wiring removed, these harnesses present yet another daunting challenge for repairers.

The cross-industry event continued with Lightstone unveiling some surprising statistics about the local market. Their data, collected across 27 major brands in partnership with seven major insurance companies, revealed that over one million surveys had been completed - reflecting an average of 45 000 repairs handled monthly.

Hella followed with a presentation on the future of onboard vehicle camera technology, delivered via video link from Germany. The session explored the evolution of autonomous driving and ADAS developments, noting that by the end of this decade, new vehicles may feature as many as 30 integrated camera systems.

Breaking from tradition, several key exhibitors, showcased their specialist services in the supply of crash repair equipment and solutions.

Nissan then stepped into the spotlight to reveal a new, inclusive approach to working with body shop repairers. This initiative is aimed at recognising and supporting the diverse specialist needs of the collision repair industry going forward.

AutoMX CEO Gary Gueli, presented insights into their network of OEM-approved body shops, which operate on an audited basis for 35 vehicle brands. He discussed future trends in risk management, warranty assurance, brand protection,

customer service, and collaboration on "save-a-car" marginal write-off vehicles.

Claire Macfie, editor of *Automotive Refinisher*, hosted an engaging session on training for body shop operators, featuring four panellists; Neo Motshabela from C3 Training Academy, Dr Frik Botha from IT-C Training, Ayanda Mtetwa from MAGALS Training Academy and Nicholas Choonilal from Florida Panelbeaters. Each person shared their passionate insights into their specialist apprenticeship training programmes and highlighted how much is actually being done.

Here are some scary numbers to consider and remember these are nationwide totals:

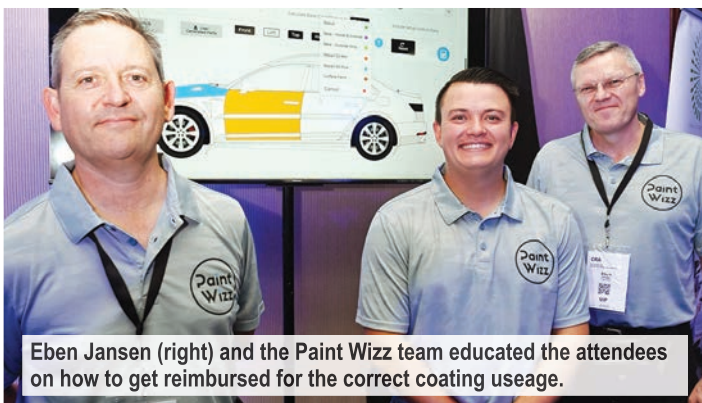
- Qualified body repairers 1376,
- Qualified spray painters 893,
- Body repair apprentices at present 297,
- Spray painter apprentices at present 220.

These numbers are tragic and fill you with apprehension about the longevity of the collision repair business overall.

Several talks focused on boosting body shop productivity and profitability, as well as management systems and repairs that could be done on older equipment instead of buying new. There were 10 spaces sold to exhibit new products, services and systems for the attendees to take a look at. These got great attention and a lot of leads were had on the day with the responsive and clued up guests. Key sponsors on the day were: Audatex, Lightstone, Moxical, BASF, Hella, Sagola, PPG, Edge IPS, Dr Smash and Paint Wizz.

CRA Director Steve Kessell concluded the conference with an inspiring talk titled "Knowledge is the Key to Success." He highlighted the challenges of meeting repair cycle time commitments in today's complex body shop environments. Steve also addressed the issues of sustainable margins and increasing vehicle complexity, emphasising the importance of pre-scan and post-scan diagnostic methods to identify fault codes and ensure the most efficient repair cycles are consistently achieved.

To say the day was well accepted would be an understatement as the content and networking was exceptional. CRA are planning to make their conference an annual event, so watch this space.



THE FACT IS...

ESG... TIME TO MOVE ON?

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) is the umbrella term that covers large organisation behaviours according to system devised by Blackrock, promoted by McKinsey & Co as well as organisations such as Bloomberg.

Then, suddenly, Blackrock announced it no longer believed in ESG during 2024 after the 'Council for Inclusive Capitalism' headed by Lynn Forester de Rothschild admitted ESG was a failure in 2023 and several major scandals. The whole show collapsed along with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) – a related large organisation scoring system. Why score DEI and ESG? For 'ethical' investment profiles, with large investment companies such as Blackrock.

Organisations – government through to companies – need good governance. They need to treat employees and shareholders fairly, and they should not discriminate. However, to turn these positive ideas into point scoring for investment quality is literally gaming the system.

So... why are we talking about dogma when collective economies from South Africa to Europe to the USA are facing ruin?

Dogma is a luxury of a lush profitable economy, not one facing huge and often unwelcome external pressures. Most advanced economies are past the point of entertaining such ideas. Organisations, governments, carbon credit traders can all demand anything they want – there is no more money left to pay them.

If we consider the thousands of well-paid fake jobs and fake organisations that milked DEI as well as ESG, and imagine all that cash instead directly going into the pockets of citizens – or more accurately, not leaving their pockets – what would that do for the economy?

That's before we consider battery electric vehicles (BEV), which do have a consumer demand – just not a 100% of new vehicle demand as imagined by many investors and governments. The reality is BEV due to price differential, issues around energy availability and range, is limited to be between 10 to 15% of the new car market, boosted to 23% when Governments shower tax cash to narrow the initial price gap. Remove the subsidy, and the market share recedes to 15% of new vehicle sales – nowhere near 10%, not even close.



The following 'luxury mantras' no longer apply – and they never did:

- BEVs are a requirement for full autonomy (SAE Level 5, full-time driverless)
- BEVs have zero emissions
- A great ESG score produces a great organisation
- Full compliance with DEI produces equity.

The answers:

- Full autonomy (SAE Level 5) exists only as demonstration systems and could use any sort of powertrain – most powertrains have full electronic control.
- The correct term for a BEV is a zero tail pipe emission vehicle.
- ESG scoring like any system can be gamed.
- DEI tends to encourage the opposite of fairness.

There is a degree of common sense in this, based on sound values taught by those around us from family, school and our professional life. Knowing right from wrong is the cornerstone.

The time really has come to assess what has been achieved by DEI and ESG based policy, extract any value (don't expect much) and move on. There is not much time left to adopt clear thinking to save what remains of our collective economies.

In the automotive business vehicles will be powered by internal combustion engines for at least another 20 years, especially in Africa. They will use petrol/diesel, they might have assistance of electric systems, and some consumers may insist on BEVs. The future is fragmented, complex and full of danger – hence the need for crystal clear thinking.

WHAT'S HOT?

MOMENTUM PARTNERS WITH LIGHTSTONE TO HELP MBRs

Momentum Insure has announced a strategic partnership with data and analytics firm, Lightstone to launch a comprehensive Customer Success Training programme for motor body repairers (MBRs). This initiative, which forms part of the insurer's broader enterprise development strategy, is designed to significantly improve the client experience during the claims and vehicle repair journey.

The programme is specifically tailored to equip Momentum Insure's MBR network with essential customer service principles, advanced empathy skills, and effective processes for managing client interactions following an accident.

"MBRs play an indispensable role in shaping our clients' experience during what is often a stressful and difficult time," says Abrie Janse van Rensburg, Head of Procurement at Momentum Insure. "As a client-first insurer, we intend that service excellence should extend across our entire value chain. The programme, a direct investment in the

capabilities of Momentum Insurer's supplier network, is part of our strategy to ensure that our motor body repairer network is not only technically highly capable but also equipped with the 'soft skills' that transform a standard repair process into an exceptional client experience. It includes training on managing client expectations, transparent communication, and empathetic engagement during post-accident interactions."

Bernard De Vantier-Strydom, Head of Projects and Research at Lightstone says: "Lightstone is proud to collaborate with an insurer that places such a high strategic value on the end-client journey. Leveraging our industry expertise, we have designed a training programme to measurably enhance the quality-of-service delivery across the repair value chain. This enterprise development initiative is a first in the MBR industry, and we believe it has the potential to set a new benchmark for excellence. In today's competitive landscape, customer satisfaction is more than a metric, it's a strategic advantage,

driving the long-term success of a business. This programme is aimed at helping MBRs master the core principles that underpin exceptional customer experiences, translating technical repair expertise into outstanding service delivery, in the process setting a new benchmark for what clients can expect from the insurance industry."

Those who participated in the inaugural training programme had only positive feedback, commenting that they believe the training will not only help their businesses improve their service and deliver a seamless end-to-end customer experience, but will ultimately help them to become more successful businesses. The programme is structured into 10 focused modules, each designed to equip participants with practical tools, insights and strategies to enhance service delivery.

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WHAT'S HOT?

AUTOMECHANIKA JOHANNESBURG CEO BREAKFAST, A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

by Claire Macfie,

The final CEO breakfast for the year, hosted by the Automechanika Johannesburg team, was held recently at Gallagher Conference Centre in Midrand. It was attended by industry movers and shakers in the aftermarket business of South Africa.

Keynote speaker and futurist Andrew Marsh, unveiled an all-new world of global activity in various world markets. Among them was a revelation that the world is fast waking up to the demands of legislators in environmental, social and governments against the world's vehicle makers and it's not a goal that is attainable in the timeframe and definitely not for the bottom line of business.

Things are not going to plan as various big name legacy manufacturers are openly saying that many of the mandated demands are totally unachievable from a business perspective in today's market where the whole topsy turvy future is unclear. Companies who lead the way in proacting the world as a greener place to live in with newly developed marketing ideas, may just have pushed the economical and sanity boat out just a bit too far.

A pushback in some markets against battery electric vehicles (BEV) is being seen. All this plus the ruthless Chinese global attempt to gain global vehicle dominance, at all costs, to the new world of zero tail pipe emissions. Common sense seems to be a prevailing influence today and the world of internal combustion engines is making a comeback along with new hybrid technologies in development and refinement.

However, the future will remain fragmented, complex and full of danger on the future road to sustainability for all concerned in the business of mobility.

Other topics covered by speakers was township development projects, the geo-political effect on the local motor industry as well as compliance and industry standards.

It was rather disheartening at times to hear old ideology and perhaps misconceived ideas being repeated. It was clear that some of the speakers were happy to regurgitate and read their presentations without proper understanding of the authority their post actually holds and the difference they could truly make by taking a positive interest and thinking outside of the box.



The speaker line-up was diversified in interest and opinion.



Michael Dehn (left), Managing Director · Messe Frankfurt South Africa is seen with automotive futurist Andrew Marsh who spoke about a fast changing world market place.



SHOW REPORT

AUTOMECHANIKA JOHANNESBURG 2025

story by Claire Macfie, pics by Ian Groat

The eleventh Automechanika Johannesburg was held at a new venue this year – Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand – and proved to be a positive move as the show looked to be better attended than in previous years. The halls are smaller and conducive to a more vibrant atmosphere, while the conferencing facilities look and feel more luxurious and up-to-date.

Around the world at the various Automechanika shows, there are a vast number of Chinese aftermarket companies on display, and Johannesburg's exhibition was no exception. The immense productivity of one nation is overwhelming, and you can find so much on offer. One company manufacture over 40 000 auto parts. They have their own moulding factory too, so you can place an order for any parts you want. They also have complete classic body shells on some models which is a clever move indeed.

From a refinishing slant, the Autoboy's team took first prize with two stands. One displaying their full range of products targeted at the body shop industry and the other with an inflatable spraybooth, which saw active demonstrations taking place. They invited their various suppliers to join forces with them at the show ensuring that there was plenty on offer for any collision repairer or DIY enthusiast.

DAZE Technologies disposable cup system was showcased by Neil Butterworth. The latest introduction from DAZE is masking film which he also featured at the exhibition.

There were a number of conferences held during the three days: CRA conference, MIWA, Right to Repair and more, which allowed for good think tanks to take place as well as networking.

The date for Automechanika Johannesburg 2026 have already been set for next year, 27-29 October.



An inflatable spraybooth from Hurricane Equipment allowed for live demonstrations.



The smaller halls allowed for an exciting atmosphere.



The Autoboy's team were on hand filled with enthusiasm as they showed their range of coatings, spray guns, disposable cups, abrasives and more.



Demonstrations were held by Sagola and Autoboy's.



Neil Butterworth, from DAZE Technologies featured the range of disposable cups and other parts of their range at the show.



Juncheng Auto Parts were one of many Chinese companies showcasing their manufacturing abilities. It's mind boggling!



Eslam Zakaria, export regional sales manager for YATU.

REFINISH

TONY'S MEGA CAR PAINT STORE; 38 YEARS STRONG WITH A PREMIUM NEW LOOK

After 38 years in the South African automotive, industrial and commercial coatings business, Tony's Colours is celebrating their longevity with a fresh new brand identity, updated customer services, and a renewed focus on local and international partnerships.

Tony's Colours started with a simple but powerful goal: provide top-quality paints and expert colour matching for auto body shops, spray painters, and industrial users and has become a dependable name for more than three decades. Over the years the company has earned its stripes by consistently delivering high-quality products and expert paint solutions to customers across the country and beyond.

What began as a modest operation in the 1980's has now grown into a fully-fledged distributor and mixing specialist business, partnering with international brands such as Mipa – a

German brand and a local paint manufacturer such as Vican. Tony's Colours has also been a go-to supplier of abrasives and surface prep materials through their partnership with Smirdex, a trusted European abrasive manufacturer known for quality sanding discs, sheets, and pads.

What really makes Tony's Colours stand out is their hands-on approach. From small repair shops to large fleet refinishers, they understand the challenges of the trade: tight turnarounds, durability requirements, and staying competitive. As chairman Tony Cardoso believes: "We don't just sell paint, we solve problems. Our customers come to us because they know we'll get the colour right first time, and we'll help them get the job done faster at a reasonable price."

A modern look, same trusted service

This rebrand is about more than looks – it's about efficiency and customer experience. Tony's Colours are focusing on their strongest and most trusted brands: MIPA, Vican, and Smirdex, so customers spend less time guessing and more time to complete the work.

An updated website has been built for busy shops, so you can browse product lines, make enquiries, and access technical specs all in one place. "We wanted our brand to reflect the quality we've always delivered from behind the counter," says Tony. "Now, whether you're a first-time buyer or a long-time customer, it's easier to understand what we offer and why it matters to your shop."





A fresh new identity, updated customer services and a renewed focus on local and international partnerships are at the centre of the Tony's Colour team's attention.



Seven mixing facilities, along with seven colour matchers, colour match 130 to 160 colours a day.



Colour is key when it comes to their MIPA and Vican brands on offer.



Vican is a proudly South African automotive refinish coating.



Smirdex abrasives are part of the one-stop-shop range of products that help customers get the job done correctly first time.

M&P BODIES SWITCH TO MIPA PUR-HS

mipa

Professional Coating Systems

“

THIS SYSTEM COMPLEMENTS OUR PREMIUM PRODUCT – FASTER TO MIX, EASIER TO APPLY, AND DELIVERING A SUPERIOR GLOSS WITH LASTING UV AND CORROSION PROTECTION.

”



Based in Alrode, Johannesburg, M&P Bodies has been setting the benchmark for quality load bodies and trailers since 1980. Founded by Manie and Paula Louw, the company is now led by their sons, Paul and Gerhard, continuing a proud family legacy.

From major truck manufacturers to single-vehicle operators, M&P Bodies designs and builds custom load bodies and trailers to exact specifications – all with uncompromising standards.

In keeping with their pursuit of perfection, the company recently adopted MIPA PUR-HS, Germany's most advanced pure 2K commercial paint system. This high-solids technology delivers exceptional coverage, quicker drying times, and long-lasting gloss retention.



Supporting its premium coatings, MIPA also provides an extensive commercial-vehicle colour database and advanced colour-matching tools – ensuring precision, consistency, and lasting brilliance on every job.

Today, M&P Truck Builders stands as one of the first in South Africa to embrace MIPA's flagship PUR-HS system, proving that moving away from traditional binder technology isn't just a choice – it's a step into the future of commercial refinishing.

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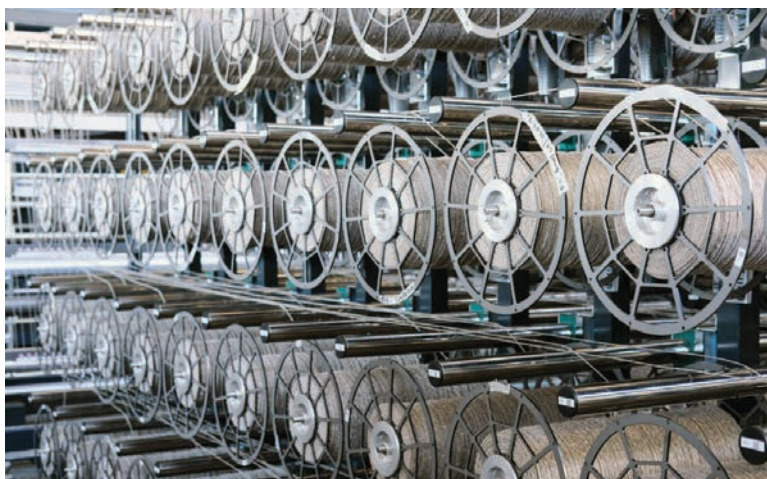
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KAPATAL

WHAT'S HOT?

A FUTURE CRAFTED FROM 'SPECIAL STEELS'



The trend in vehicle manufacturing is increasingly shifting towards lighter, safer and more resource-efficient vehicles. This applies not only to vehicles with low CO₂ drives but also the manufacture of components for electric vehicles, which rely on lighter materials to maximise range and energy efficiency.

Innovators such as the Swiss Steel Group are looking at special steel technologies that both offer maximum performance and promote the sustainable use of resources.

A key goal of automotive manufacturers is to reduce fuel consumption in vehicles with conventional drives through lightweight construction while increasing the range of electric cars. The Swiss Steel Group's special steels contribute to this by enabling components to be produced with less material and optimised performance, this reduces CO₂ emissions over the entire life cycle of the vehicles – from production to operation to disposal.

Particularly noteworthy is the use of Bainidur 1300, an innovative material from Deutsche Edelstahlwerke in Germany. The bainitic (heat-treated) steel enables the cost-efficient production of lightweight components that can be processed easily without additional tempering processes or

the risk of distortion – even for large format components (>60mm round).

Thanks to its lower materials consumption and easier machinability, this steel also contributes significantly to resource conservation.

Ease of processing

In addition to sustainability, the focus is on efficiency in production. With its special steels, the Swiss Steel Group offers solutions that are not only high-performance, but also particularly easy to process. Bainidur 1300, thanks to its excellent machinability, helps to minimise production costs when manufacturing complex components while ensuring consistent quality.

Thanks to the optimised forging and cooling process, the effort required for the finished parts is significantly reduced. This saves manufacturers both time and money.

Bainidur 1300 offers an outstanding combination of lightweight construction and machinability. It enables components to be manufactured efficiently without compromising on quality. At the same time, it significantly reduces the amount of material used, which has a positive impact on resource conservation.

Innovative solutions

The Swiss Steel Group also offer tailor-

made solutions for the most demanding applications in the automotive industry, for example, the heat-resistant steel Thermodur 2382 Supercool ensures shorter production times in the manufacture of sheet metal components such as the B-pillar by significantly reducing process costs through combined hot forming and heat treatment. The SF-2000 LQ40 plastic mould steel from Sorel Forge is characterised by excellent purity, which enables a high-gloss polishable surface – ideal for the random production of crystal-clear headlight lenses.

Steeltec's HSX 90 special steel is used in the production of airbag sleeves and ensures fast and reliable manufacturing, with the steel withstanding extreme loads until the airbag is deployed.

These special steels, which are already showing up in body shops, support the automotive industry with high developed materials that meet the highest performance requirements, as well as by providing innovative solutions that are both resource – efficient and efficient in production.

The use of sustainable special steels not only reduces CO₂ footprint of vehicles but also simplifies production and makes it more cost-effective.

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HUMAN ASSETS

Collision Pros Autobody Repair Centre, located in Edenvale, Johannesburg, is home to Alvinah Matlala - a dedicated and passionate spray painter whose career journey took an unexpected but fulfilling turn. Initially envisioning a future in science and health, Alvinah found her true calling in the automotive industry. As she puts it, "I'm in love with what I'm doing right now!"

Alvinah began her journey at Collision Pros in a different role but consistently expressed her desire to train as a spray painter. Recognising her commitment and enthusiasm, management supported her transition into the trade. She completed her apprenticeship with the support of Mbunutu Training Centre and has since qualified as a professional spray painter.

Her creativity and love for the craft shine through in her work. Alvinah continues to refine her skills with the backing of her company and takes pride in mentoring others. Currently, she supervises three apprentices, sharing her knowledge and inspiring them through hands-on training and guidance.

Alvinah emphasises the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. She believes in setting clear boundaries - leaving work at work and home at home - to ensure personal well-being and professional focus.

In a traditionally male-dominated industry, Alvinah offers empowering advice to women aspiring to enter the field:

"Have self-confidence and seek guidance from experienced professionals who can offer support. Look for a company that provides training to help you grow your skills and become the best version of yourself in your chosen vocation."

ARTISAN PROFILE

A PASSIONATE AUTOMOTIVE REFINISHER BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

story by Claire Macfie, pics by Jay Groat



NEUE KLASSE HARD- AND SOFTWARE TECH STACK*

Functional domain

BODY & COMFORT

INFOTAINMENT

AUTOMATED DRIVING

DRIVING

Software applications
Functionalities and features

Software platforms

BMW Core Platform

BMW Operating System X

BMW ADAS Platform

BMW Driving Platform

Middleware

Shared Service Layer for over-the-air updates, cyber security, AI platforms, data management, etc.

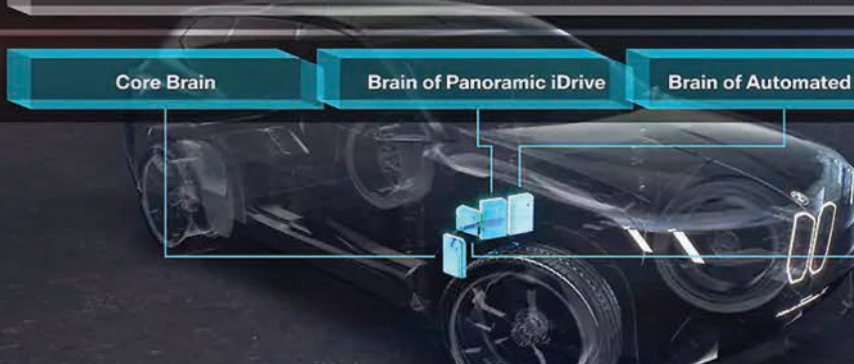
Hardware

Core Brain

Brain of Panoramic iDrive

Brain of Automated Driving

Heart of Joy



FUTURE TECH

THE SHOCK OF THE NEXT NEUE KLASSE...

When a company announces a revolution, and that company is BMW, the world listens. What made this different? Not only the latest thinking on electrified powertrains, not only significantly increased vehicle to anything connectivity ('V2X'), but a return to the important events that started in 1961 and came to define the whole company.

The OG Neue Klasse

BMW has had a very interesting and occasionally troubled past. In the 1950s it undertook manufacturing under licence from Iso, owned by Renzo Rivolta, to build the BMW Isetta 250 and 350 bubble car – and the stretched version, the 600. The model range at the time also included the 501, the V8 powered 503 GT coupe and 507 roadster – all were super expensive.

The gap needed to be filled to allow the company to build more cars and sell them at a bigger margin. Enter the BMW 1500 sedan, the beginning of a new dawn. It was not just a group of features but developed with deep knowledge. The humble BMW 1500 had a brand new M10 four-cylinder engine with 1499 cm³ producing 59 kW which featured a forged steel crankshaft, cast iron block, an aluminium cylinder head, hemispherical combustion chambers and a short stroke. It would reach high engine speeds effortlessly and was not expensive to make... our first clue.

Independent suspension all round, not unheard of but not common on mass market vehicles. The aim was to give better than average roadholding.

Front disc brakes as standard – this was uncommon on mass produced vehicles.

A well finished and stable body structure, with enough features to justify an above average price.

BMW did not have a lot of money to play with and needed cash flow fast. To make every single invested cent work, each decision needed to be taken carefully.

The engine, for example was expanded three more times so that by 1963, when the BMW 1800 appeared (engine upgrade, 1773 cm³ engine producing 81 kW), it became recognised internally as the real thing – the Neue Klasse. In 1965 the new Munich plant assembly halls

for the BMW 1800 were complete, the same year the BMW 2000 appeared (engine upgrade, 1990 cm³ producing 96 kW).

Just across the road from the plant, construction had started that year on the stadium for the 1972 Olympic games...

The engine family was also used by the C/CS2000 coupe built by Karmann, and then...

A short wheelbase two-door car, the 1502, appeared. Then things really took off.

What became of these magic building blocks?

The BMW 1500 after 10 years morphed in the first 5 series, E12.

The BMW 1502 was built from 1966 until 1977, replaced by the first 3 series E21 introduced in 1975.

The BMW 2000 C/CS was re-engineered to become the 2800 CS E9, which evolved into the 3.0 CSL 'batmobile' by 1972. It was the precursor to the 6 series E24.

The Neue Klasse platform was underneath all of these in one form or another.

The crowning glory? The M10 block with a turbocharger almost as big, became M12 F1 engine which took Nelson Piquet in a Brabham to his second world championship. The M12 produced over the 1000 kW in qualifying and 600 kW in race trim. A true fusion of engine and turbocharger.

That clue.... all of this was essentially from one box of bits.

The big realisation

The formula worked well, but after a parade of challengers over many decades.... the arrival of Tesla Model 3 in 2017 aimed squarely at Audi A4, BMW 3 series and the Mercedes-Benz C Class with pure electric power was a huge challenge. This required a BMW deep innovation cycle.

2025 marked the unveiling of the next Neue Klasse which is, like the first Neue Klasse, a recognisable collection of bits.

Production of the first version – iX3 NA5 – from a new purpose build plant at Debrecen in Hungary, will be followed by a longer wheelbase iX3 NA6 to be built in China. Later in 2026 the i3 NA0/NA1 will appear – the new electrified ICE powered 3 series will also be unveiled in 2026. In total Neue Klasse will go on to power 40

unique- or upgraded models by 2030, of which at least six will be pure electric models.

The Munich plant was established in 1922 in the disused Bayerische Flugzeugwerke Aircraft works to build engines for tractors – commercial vehicles will cease internal combustion engine manufacturing by 2027. Engine manufacturing will continue elsewhere in the group.

The big bit

Now to the part where 'software defined vehicles' ('SDV') is contested. Central to Neue Klasse are four processors which share access to key services.

The four 'Superbrains' have separate functions:

1. 'Core': The module is connected to 50 sensors and looks after security, access, HVAC, data flow, interior and exterior lighting as well as over air updates. It processes information 10 times faster than previous generation systems.

2. 'Panoramic iDrive': The module controls the 3D head up display, the infotainment system, vocal control and central display – all connected in the iDrive way, and AI enabled. So that means endless corrections to 'helpful' alterations.

3. 'Automated driving': The module takes care of ADAS, integrating four previous generation processors into one unit which operates 20 times faster.

4. 'Heart of joy': The module takes care of acceleration, cornering stability, steering assistance and regenerative braking.

The system has many, many fine wire connections – although 600m less wire.

The four 'Superbrains' are connected to nodes around the vehicle, allowing a much-simplified harness with 600m less wire. The use of

virtual fuses allows the wire core diameter to be minimised, further reducing the harness weight as well as cost.

So... SVD or not SVD?

Software engineers think any over air update can automatically transform a vehicle, but only if ultimately the hardware is fitted in the first place. So, the debate rages – is the Neue Klasse physical or virtual?

This confusion is because of the idea a few clicks from time to time and the car will simply 'last for ever', it will 'evolve' and 'become better'. Ask anyone with any form of computer – and that includes smart phones – how's that going?

The reality is, a vehicle is a physical device, it will last around four times longer than a phone, tablet or laptop, is more complex than any of those and literally is the difference between life or death whilst in motion.

For the repairer there is going to be much more information to come as more repair information gets published. Right now, this presents new issues, not least of which is those humble super thin wires. Just ask any aircraft technician about how easy it is to accidentally damage a harness while trying to remove and refit things.

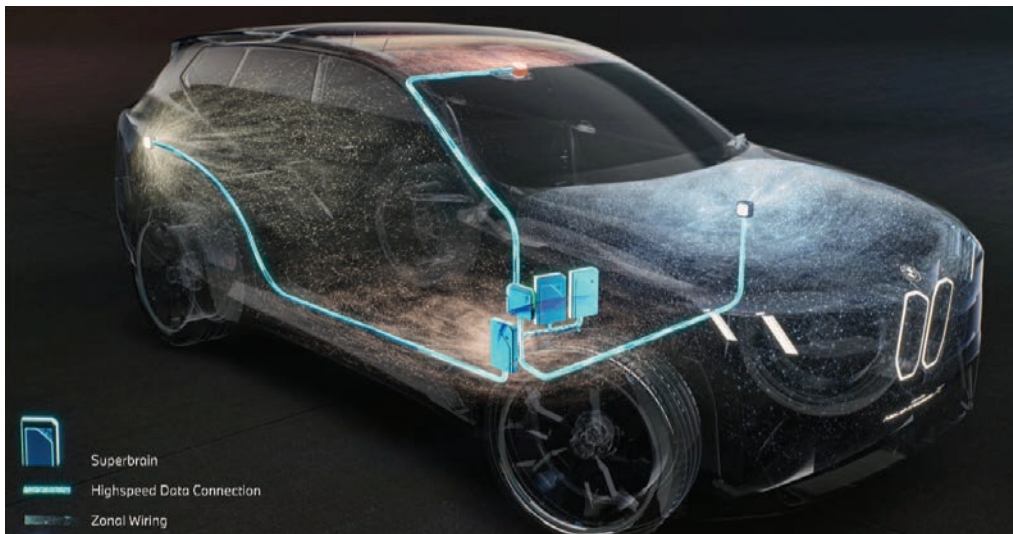
A final thought on 'Superbrains'

I'm not sure of the strategy, but having four modules clustered together in the region of the front bulkhead and inner A pillar may be traditional but does mean these parts might end up damaged during a partial overlap head-on collision, where the front wheel will try and move back into the A pillar area.

Just a thought ... Could be wrong, and I hope I am.



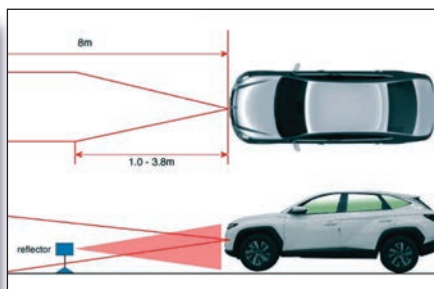
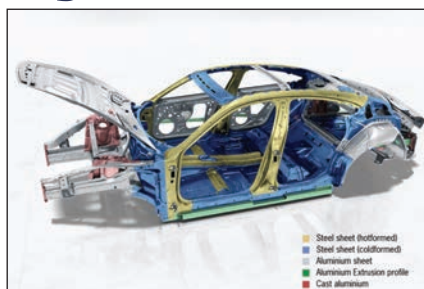
Andrew Marsh
hello@autobible.com



The system has many, many fine wire connections – although 600m less wire is needed in total.

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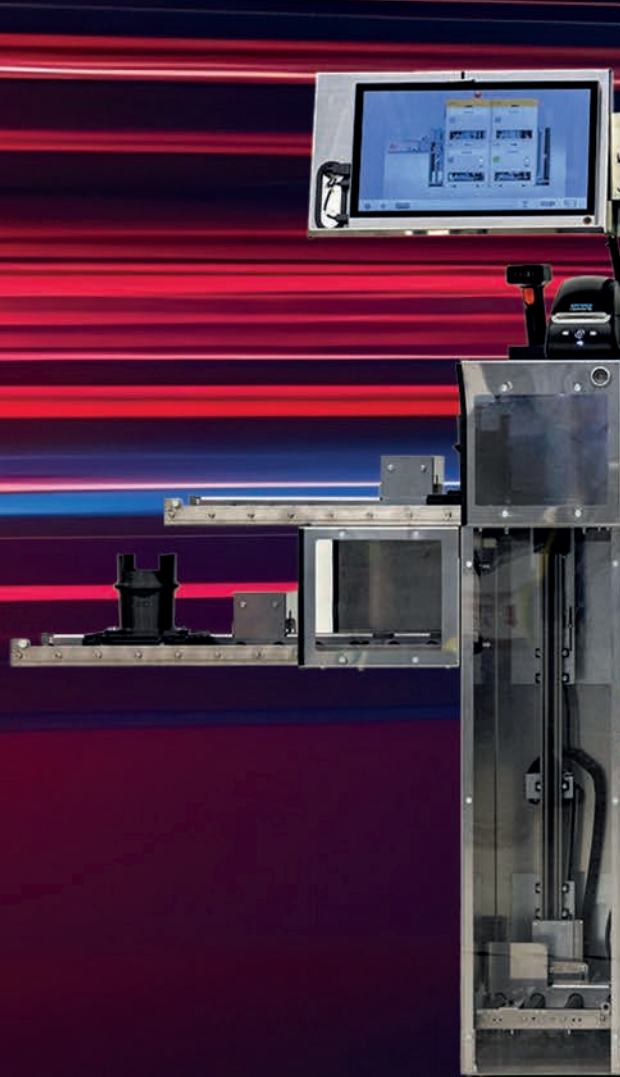
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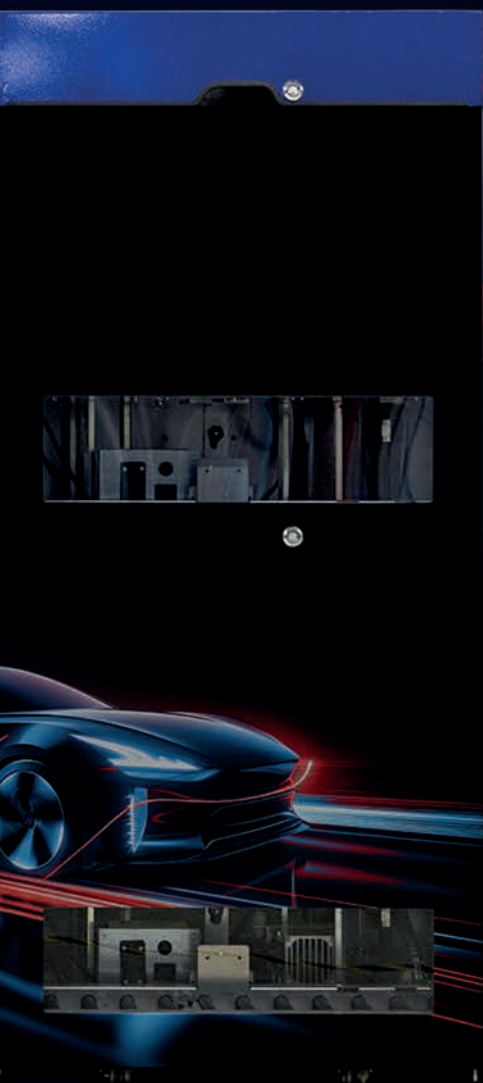
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LOCAL UPDATE

AUTO WEEK; SAW LOTS OF QUESTIONS BUT FEW ANSWERS...



Roger Houghton
News from the Zoo

The fourth Auto Week conference organised by Naamsa, The Automotive Business Council, and staged in the Coega Special Economic Zone in Gqeberha over three days at the beginning of October – was a massive talk shop for the South African automotive industry. Unfortunately, the relevant, participating government bodies – including the attendance of Parks Tau, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) – did not reveal any concrete plans to ensure ongoing vehicle manufacture in South Africa.

Tau did allude to the fact that he saw an opportunity for South Africa's automotive industry to work with the fledgling vehicle and component manufacturers in Saudi Arabia which he visited recently. (The first car assembly plant in Saudi Arabia was set up only two years ago by Lucid Air to build electric luxury cars, with an initial annual production volume of 5 000 units). Being a future supplier to Saudi Arabian companies could happen, but it is way down the road, and what we need is action now.

Tau also hinted that some of the newcomers or existing brands from China and India have expressed interest in local manufacture, starting with SKD and then switching to CKD. Let's see if any of this happens because when setting up local manufacture one needs a healthy domestic market to take a significant percentage of locally made vehicles and components to ensure financial viability.

The South African domestic market has been stuck around half a million vehicle sales a year for many years now, so there is no growth. In addition, the current local manufacturing OEMs, except for Toyota, are having a tough time on the sales front, as they must now fight for market share with a host of additional imported brands, predominantly from China, as well as extended ranges from Indian vehicle makers.

This is also the case with several of the long-time importers such as Mazda, Honda, Volvo, Mini, together with Stellantis brands that include Peugeot, Citroën, Alfa Romeo, Jeep, and Fiat, all of whom are seeing shrinking sales figures compared to a couple of years ago. As a sideline, it is interesting to note that those brands assembled vehicles in South Africa from CKD packs in the past and all are now importers of built-up cars.

The existing local motor industry – particularly vehicle and component suppliers – are getting frustrated with the delayed response from government regarding future support programmes for the industry as they are unable to do any forward planning without knowing the amount and type of assistance that will come from government. This is endangering approval by their mother companies of upcoming projects due to the time lag.

The global automotive industry outside China and India is in turmoil, with several of the legacy brands, particularly those in Germany, in a dire financial state. This situation means the mother companies

need to know exactly what the terms are for local manufacture in each country seeking participation in its motor industry before making localisation decisions.

The organised industry in South asked the DTIC to advance the review of the current Automotive Masterplan to 2025 instead of waiting for 2026, but at this stage the department has not even appointed consultants to assist with the project. (The industry representatives were hoping to have tentative regulations for solid discussion in October 2025).

The jam-packed Auto Week programme was somewhat ambitious, with presentations and panel discussions sometimes taking place at the same time on three different stages – Presidential Stage, Innovation Stage and Naamsa 90 Stage. Often presentations overran the published times, and it was difficult to catch up. As an example, Minister Tau and his entourage arrived an hour and a half late at the beginning of the second day's activities which severely impacted the day's programme.

I know there are a host of topics that can be covered during such an annual get-together, but this was information overload. Hopefully the programme for the 2026 Auto Week, to be held in eThekweni, KZN, will be simplified. Admittedly when there are more than 1 000 delegates, as was the case this year, it is accepted that they have varying interests, so maybe two stages, not three – might just be the answer.



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Masking tape has been around a long time – 100 years, to be exact. It's often overlooked by the average consumer, but body shop owners and technicians understand and appreciate what a good masking tape can do. Clean edges, bleed-through and adhesive transfer are all critical details that can make or break a paint job. That's why the choice of masking tape is a decision to consider rather carefully.

It was in 1925 that a 3M engineer invented adhesive masking tape after he saw the difficulty technicians had creating two-tone paint jobs. With so many options available today in the collision repair market – and with a relentless focus on productivity, efficiency and quality repairs – selecting the right tape for the right job is more important than ever. Let's talk about where to start.

Like any tool, masking tape should be selected to match the job at hand. Key considerations may include:

How long will the tape stay on the vehicle after it's painted? Do you run a high-throughput shop where tape is removed soon after the vehicle is repaired? Or do you spend your time on high-end, bespoke jobs where the tape stays on the vehicle longer and needs to be removed cleanly after a day or more?

What temperatures do you work in? Is there humidity? Will a work in progress ever be left outdoors?

Are you working with simple, straight lines or conforming to three-dimensional curves? Are you masking large, simple areas? Or are you completing fine line work like a custom flame job?

What kind of paint are you using, and what is its viscosity and chemical composition? What kind of surface are you painting? Does the job include areas like greasy wheel wells?

Above all, you may consider what impact your tape choice has on efficiency in your shop and any potential for rework.

That's where science comes in. Masking tape has come a long way over the last 100 years, and today it's more than just a piece of paper with glue on it. In the development of masking products, 3M uses complex proprietary specifications and processes – many of them patented – for the paper, the adhesives and other components.

For example, the paper itself is engineered to specific tolerances for its ability to stretch or curve along with a work surface. The subtle texture of a masking tape, which professionals call creping, permits flexing and stretching. Creping needs to be robust enough to let the tape follow body contours, but thin enough to preserve a sharp edge for a clean paint line.

A saturant solution fills the tape's pores, not only to make it more resistant to water and solvents, but also to make it more structurally resistant to tearing and slivering upon removal. Barrier coats amplify the tape's waterproofness. Even the cutting angle that creates the tape edge is calculated for the sharpest possible line.

Then there's the adhesive, which is a science all on its own. For each planned use, the adhesive needs to be strong enough to keep the paint where the tech wants it and nowhere else – but forgiving

enough to release properly when the job is complete. That means finding a sweet spot where the strength of the adhesive and the strength of the paperwork work together as intended.

A focus on cost

The cost of a roll of tape is small in comparison to the job's overall cost. However, selecting the wrong type of tape can put your repair and your bottom line at risk. The costliest outcome is the most dramatic – having to redo a job. Rework slows down throughput and productivity, as it delays your repair and inhibits new work from entering the booth. The wrong tape can create lost time and money which, in turn, affects more than one invoice.

Other masking missteps can affect your profitability in less obvious ways. Adhesive transfer can occur when the tape is not removed cleanly. To navigate around this, a technician may choose to heat up the booth to aid in its clean removal. This process costs a technician's time, makes the shop spend more on energy for the heat, and limits turnover by blocking another car from entering the booth. Even earlier in the process, a tape that doesn't adhere firmly to complex surfaces might require the technician to spend extra time rubbing it down or adding additional tape. A tape built on "board-like" paper that lifts off curves instead of following them can be the cause that subsequently leads to increased labour time and ancillary costs.

Where innovation meets experience

The expertise of auto body paint technicians is just as important as the care and science manufacturers put into the development of masking tape. The people who use the products are experts in their field just like the manufacturers are, and the best results happen when the two come together.

Technicians know their work. They know the nuances of their shops, such as the temperature, the environment and the procedures. There are tapes that answer a variety of needs, and technicians know which choices feel right in their hands each time they take on a job. Their judgment is trusted, and it's amazing how much the manufacturers and users teach one another.

Hidden Factors

Most paint technicians know "dry" isn't what car enthusiasts think it is. A car can be out of the booth as long as 30 days before its surface is fully cured. That makes the adhesive release of masking tape even more mission critical. I've seen occasions when tape has pulled paint off a vehicle – and messing up a paint job is a costly exercise to restore. Even if you go back and make it look good, that means adding more paint. That adds cost to the shop and adds weight to the car. All these factors make it critical to choose the right tape, so the job comes out right the first time, every time.

In the 100 years since masking tape was invented, it has come a long way from simple glue on paper. There's a lot of science that goes into developing tape that can perform in a shop environment and withstand various working conditions and temperatures. Disregarding important considerations when selecting masking tape for your shop

may result in poor quality repairs and potential rework. With the advancement of innovation within masking tapes over the last 100 years, today's body shop techs have options available to them that can lead to superior results both on the vehicle and the shop's bottom line.

UK NEWS

CAR INSURERS TO PAY £200M COMPENSATION TO 270 000 DRIVERS



An estimated 270 000 drivers are receiving a total of £200 million compensation from car insurers after the regulator found they were short-changed when their vehicle was stolen or written off.

The money is being paid out after a review by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which found insurers had undervalued vehicles when paying out on claims.

In some cases, payments were automatically reduced for assumed pre-existing damage, a practice that particularly disadvantaged careful drivers who had looked after their vehicle and meant they did not receive enough money to buy a like-for-like replacement. The FCA reviewed practises across the market, after warning insurers not to undervalue cars and other insured items when settling claims.

In June 2023, it told the insurer Direct Line to review five years of claims and pay compensation where appropriate, while in August this year Admiral said it had set aside £50 m for customers who had been underpaid.

The FCA said insurers had changed their claims processes because of its action and would be contacting customers who were owed money. Already £129 m of the £200 m has been paid to almost 150 000 customers. That's then £10 000 per driver.

Sarah Pritchard, the deputy chief executive of the FCA, said: "We'll step in when consumers aren't getting fair value – and we are pleased to see that the practises which led to some unfair payouts have already changed. This means thousands of motorists are getting back what their car was worth, in cases where cars have been stolen or written off. "If you're owed compensation, your insurer will contact you or will have already done so – there's nothing you need to do."

Cormac Bradley, the senior actuarial director at the financial services consultancy Broadstone, said it had become increasingly difficult to value cars given the pace of price fluctuations in recent years.

"There's also a higher number of cash settlements as vehicle repairs are hampered by supply chain pressures and labour shortages. Insurers need to be confident that they reflect the uncertainty appropriately in the customer's favour to avoid under compensation.

"This is no small challenge at a time of volatile car prices so it is pleasing that the regulator and the motor insurance industry have reached a resolution which will enable fair, historic compensation while certainly moving forward."

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TOP SHOP

THE TRANS LETABA LEGEND LIVES ON

The more *Automotive Refinisher* feature top shops in the collision repair industry – whether locally, in Africa or abroad – the more it becomes apparent that the family run businesses remain renowned for quality workmanship and customer focus. This is exactly the case with Trans Letaba Panelbeaters.

Based in Tzaneen, Limpopo SA, they are an exemplary body shop repairing everything from paintless dents, aluminium, carbon fibre and major-structural repair. The company has evolved wonderfully since its doors were opened by Ockert Botha in 1989, a qualified artisan himself seeking his own opportunity. His wife Magdalena and son Hansie also joined the business at the same time. Hansie's son Ivan, has now also joined the business and is proud to continue the lineage.

Over the years they have invested in their business by staying up to date with the latest equipment and technology. This has allowed them to be on trend and keep up with vehicle manufacturer needs on their ever-changing models and materials. They are a multi-manufacturer approved panelbeater from the big names such as

VW, Audi, Mercedes-Benz to name a few, through to the newer kids on the block like Chery, Haval, Jaecoo, GWM and others.

Trans Letaba Panelbeaters are also a recognised training facility with merSETA and have trained 32 MBR/spraypainters. They are a company that understands that longevity for their business, as well as the collision repair industry as a whole means investing in skills as well as their staff.

The PPG MoonWalk® automated paint mixing solution has been a valuable addition to Trans Letaba Panelbeaters. It is a high-precision system that replaces the manual mixing process which boosts efficiency, reduces the amount of wasted product and helps to maintain a cleaner work environment for technicians.

PPG VisualizID™ offers exceptional colour visualisation technology when connected with PPG's camera-equipped spectrophotometer. This tool helps find the best colour variant from PPG's extensive colour match library.

"Our strength has always been our attention to detail and excellent customer service. We feel well-equipped to grow steadily into the future by maintaining these goals," concluded Hansie.



Trans Letaba team spirit is evident across the entire workshop in this world class repair centre.



Manager Gys Pretorius has 25 years in the business.



Ivan Botha is bringing a new energy and understanding to the collision repair business of today.



Magdalena Botha and Hansie, mother and son team, are committed to customer satisfaction.



In-house company training keeps the high standards of the business says Barney (left) and assistant Tsepo.



There is increasing demand for small area repair says Kenny Kirton, who has 10 years of experience in this field.



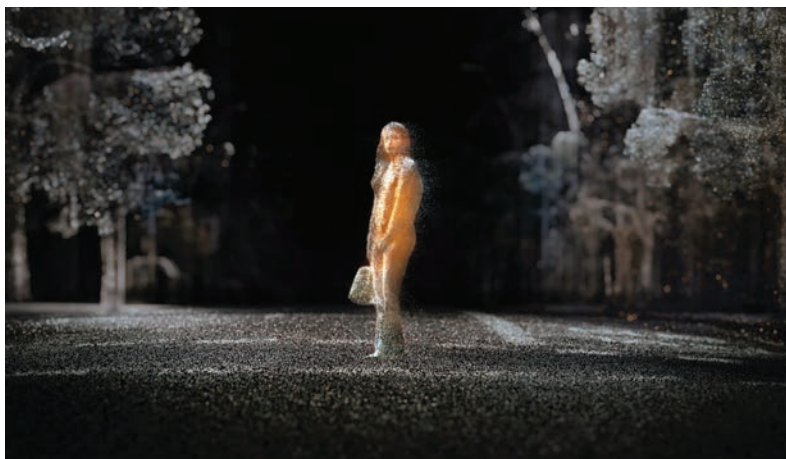
Hennie Brink (left) is upbeat about the latest PPG MoonWalk® mixing system which reduces wastage. He is seen with Balco technical rep, Tien.



AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY

VOLVO LEVERAGES AI AND GAUSSAIN SPLATTING TO REVOLUTIONISE SAFETY

by Andrew Marsh



This is an illustrative image and not an exact representation of the Gaussain Splatting technique. But it does show that virtual worlds, rare crash simulations, and next-gen rendering push automotive safety into a new era.

Volvo Cars are redefining the future of road safety by turning to the virtual world. The Swedish car maker has revealed a ground-breaking initiative using AI-generated environments and an advanced technique called Gaussain Splatting to speed up developing, training, and validating its next-generation driver-safety systems.

What is Gaussain Splatting and why does it matter?

At the heart of this innovation is Gaussain Splatting, a cutting-edge computational rendering method capable of generating ultra-realistic 3D environments from real-world sensor data. The term may sound like science fiction, but its impact is very real: it allows engineers to recreate entire traffic scenes with remarkable visual fidelity and manipulate these with ease – adding or removing vehicles, adjusting pedestrian behaviour, or tweaking weather conditions.

For Volvo, this means taking data from actual road incidents – such as emergency braking, sudden steering changes, or manual overrides – and turning them into rich, controllable simulations. These virtual scenarios are used to stress-test and refine Volvo's safety software at a scale and speed previously thought impossible.

"Thanks to Gaussain Splatting, we can select one of the rare edge cases and explode it into thousands of new variations... This has the potential to unlock a scale that we've never had before," said Alwin Bakkens, Head of Global Software Engineering at Volvo Cars.

A leap forward in handling 'Edge cases'

In automotive safety development, one of the biggest challenges is preparing for rare but dangerous 'edge cases' – those one-in-a-million moments that rarely show up in real-world testing but can have catastrophic consequences when they do.

Historically, identifying and testing for these scenarios could take months of real-world data collection. With Volvo's new AI-driven simulation framework, that process can be completed in a few days.

This offers a massive acceleration in development cycles and dramatically enhances confidence in how advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) perform under stress. It also opens the door to anticipating emerging risk patterns – potentially catching safety threats before they occur on public roads.

Collaboration is key: NVIDIA and Zenseact

This breakthrough isn't happening in a vacuum. A long-standing partnership with NVIDIA, a global AI and high-performance computing leader, is propelling Volvo's work. The two companies are collaborating to deploy the latest GPU-based rendering and simulation technologies in the automotive space.

Also central to the project is Zenseact, the AI software company founded by Volvo Cars. Zenseact is working with Volvo's in-house teams to develop these AI-driven virtual environments – ones tailored for safety-critical software validation.

Academic backing: WASP and Swedish PhD programmes

This isn't just an engineering sprint – it's also a scientific one. The project is supported by WASP (Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Programme), one of Sweden's most significant research initiatives focused on AI and autonomous systems. As

part of this collaboration, Volvo is sponsoring PhD research with several Swedish universities to explore the future potential of neural rendering techniques like Gaussain Splatting in real-world automotive safety.

This fusion of academic rigour and industry expertise ensures that the technology isn't just cutting edge – it's validated, peer-reviewed, and built to last.

A new chapter in Volvo's safety legacy

While this move feels distinctly futuristic, Volvo is building on a rich legacy of safety innovation. Famously the three-point seat belt was created at Saab but saw the light of day at Volvo. From the 1960s onwards, Volvo safety research team played a pivotal role in shaping core features like the enhanced passenger survival cell, Whiplash Injury Protection System ("WIPS"), Side Impact Protection System (SIPS) which evolved into floor level load transfer body structure members for side impact protection, seat belt pre-tensioners, multiple air bag developments, roll-over protection, pedestrian safety, protection for cyclists from opening doors when parked and more. Volvo led, and other followed.

A key aspect of the safety team was to attend real world impacts, mainly in Sweden, to learn first-hand about the consequences of the impact. This latest initiative continues that legacy – but with a twist. Rather than waiting for impacts to take place, Volvo can now create thousands of 'what if' scenarios along with the system enhancements to improve occupant as well as pedestrian/cyclist protection, that could one day save lives.

"We already have millions of data points of moments that never happened," explained Bakkens. "Now we're turning those into testable, learnable scenarios for our safety systems."

Industry implication: What does this mean for repairers and insurers?

Volvo's adoption of AI simulation and Gaussain Splatting could mark a turning point in how ADAS systems are validated and certified during the creation or updates of new vehicles. The result will be a mix of simplified calibration, and possible 'new' calibration steps. This will mean awareness of this development and which models get systems developed with these tools.

Insurers, too, could potentially benefit from the greater depth of system development, potentially lowering risk profiles by covering off more scenarios than is possible with existing processes. It will be interesting to see if the development tools make into production, and if so, what will happen to claim frequency (it should decrease).

Conclusion: a safer road ahead, rendered in code

Volvo's embrace of AI and neural rendering isn't just about cool tech – it's a practical evolution of how manufacturers can design safer vehicles. The company is moving more of the safety system testing from the physical environment to the simulation lab by transforming rare traffic events into digital experiments which can be optimised faster.

In doing so, Volvo isn't just preparing for 'rare' events today – it's also getting engineering processes ready for tomorrow's unknowns.



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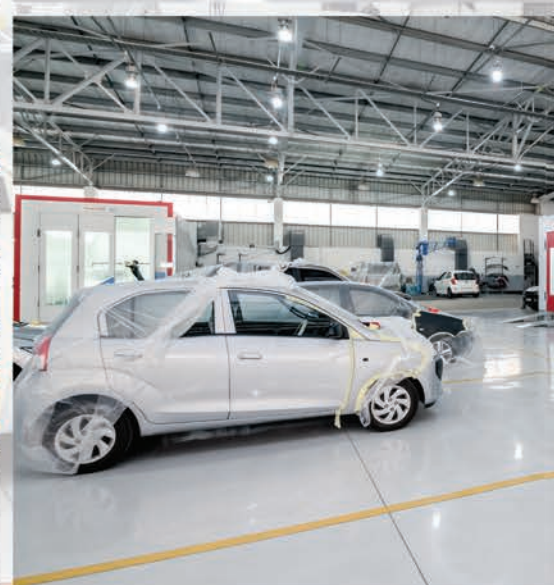


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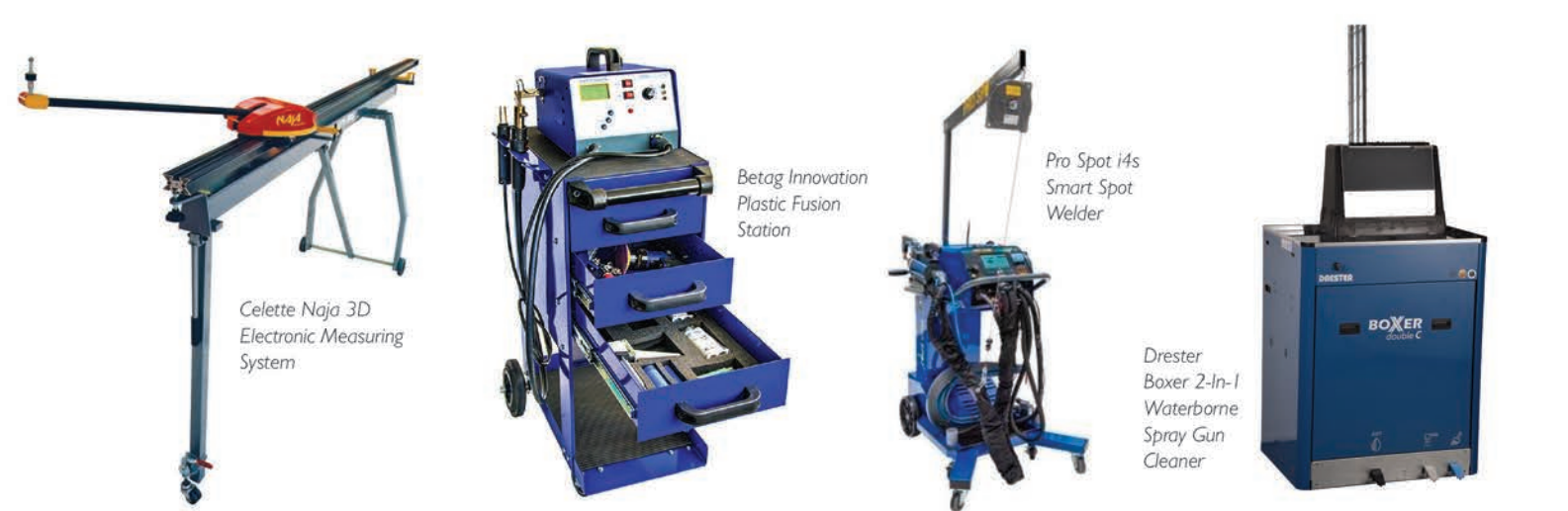
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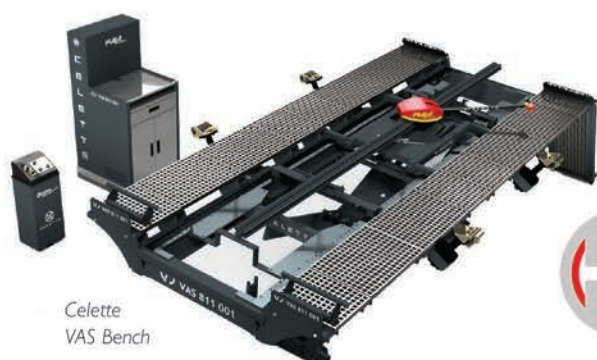
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TRAINING

MAGALS TRAINING ACADEMY

story by Claire Macfie, pics by Jay Groat

Ayanda Mtetwa (front centre) is seen with some of this year's student intake.

In the recent skills drain that South Africa finds itself facing, MAGALS Training Academy is taking the call to train excellent artisans to heart for the motor industry. MAGALS Training Academy was established by John Magalhães, who has over 48 years of experience in the automotive repair industry. With his vast knowledge and expertise, he wanted to create a platform to transfer the skills he had acquired over the decades to the next generation.

We no longer have the same pool of artisans readily available in the industry. Panel shops are battling to find competent spray painters and panel beaters to do the work. They are fully accredited, which means they can offer qualifications that are recognised nationally. Learners who train within the MTA facility receive a complete package that covers practical, theoretical, and workplace-based learning, ensuring they meet industry standards.

Courses are offered throughout the year with structured quarterly intakes. Short courses are also available and can be slotted

in and around the main intake of students. Ayanda Mtetwa heads up MAGALS Training Academy.

She has a wealth of knowledge in collision repair as she owned and ran her own body shop. The students are in the caring hands of Gideon Sithole who oversees lectures and practicals the students need to achieve along the way to gain qualification.

Each student is paired with a mentor, and the shop floor is busy with a happy atmosphere as work is carried out. The training facility offer Competency Based Modular Training (CBMT) and they are also seeing the growth of Artisan Recognition of Prior Learning (ARPL). Flexibility ensures that full time students and those employed who are looking to upskill are catered for.

They attract students through partnerships with schools, SETAs, government programmes as well as industry players. Word of mouth is also a great advertisement for MAGALS Training Academy as students enjoy the mentorship and career guidance provided helping a more structured way into

the industry.

Students train on various paint systems to ensure they are market ready. Students work on real vehicles as part of their training, using advanced spray booths, alignment systems, and diagnostic tools that reflect modern industry practises.

"Our philosophy is to make them adaptable so they can succeed regardless of the workshop environment they enter," says Ayanda. "We have strong relationships with suppliers who provide paint systems, tools, and other training materials. These partnerships ensure our students are trained on modern, industry-standard products.

"Training in collision repair, panel beating, refinishing, mechanical repair, and auto body alignment is on offer. Programmes cover both structural and non-structural repair, as well as cosmetic refinishing. Beyond technical skills, we provide soft skills training, workplace readiness, and business management modules for those who want to open their own workshops one day," she concluded.



Gideon Sithole oversees the theory and practicals of students with compassionate understanding and patience.



A vibrant eagerness to learn and establish a new career is what the students bring to the table each day.



Each student is paired with a mentor during training.



Students train on various paint systems to make sure they are market ready.



PRODUCT PROFILE

PRESSURE PERFECT: GAV 60 SERIES DELIVERS MEASURED CONFIDENCE

GAV tyre inflating guns provide versatile solutions to meet various pressure control needs, making them ideal for automotive and industrial applications.

Tyre pressures are one of those small, invisible details that quietly shape drivability, fuel economy and safety. In a busy refinish shop, the tool you reach for between panels has to be fast, obvious and dependable — not an extra chore. GAV's 60 series of tyre-inflating guns (from the workhorse 60C up to the digital 60GD) is designed around exactly that problem: give technicians a reliable, repeatable way to set pressure and move on — day in, day out.

Built for the bench and the bay

GAV's approach is straightforward: build a compact, metal-bodied gun that can withstand routine knocks and provide a clear reading when it matters. For quick stops during a refit or pre-delivery check, the 60C gives a rugged, no-nonsense inflation point; the 60D and 60G add analogue gauges for operators who prefer the instant visual check; and the 60GD brings a digital readout for shops that prioritise exact numbers and quick verification. The result is a small product family that fits different workflows without forcing you to change habits.

Why the right inflator matters to refinishers

Beyond safety, tyre pressure has direct workshop implications: poorly inflated tyres affect how a vehicle sits on the lift, how seams line up during panel adjustments, and how a car behaves during test drives. A reliable inflating gun saves time — no more back-and-forth to a bench gauge — and reduces rework caused by overlooked pressures. For fleet clients, the digital readout also simplifies documentation during multi-vehicle checks.

Durability and serviceability: a shop's bottom line

GAV's models prioritise metal construction and replaceable fittings — small choices that cut downtime. Hose tails, valve cores and the gauge itself are serviceable in the field; that means a workshop can keep a favourite tool in rotation rather than replacing it when a minor part fails.

Choosing the right model (practical guidance)

- GAV60C: Fast, rugged and simple. Best for quick inflation checks where the workshop already has a master gauge.
- GAV60D: Analogue gauge on-gun — a reliable option for techs who prefer dial feedback while working.
- GAV60G: Larger dial and enhanced visibility for busier bays

where quick reads speed up the flow.

- GAV60GD: Digital precision for fleet work or quality-control checks where numbers are recorded.

Bottom line

From quick inflation checks to digital precision, the GAV 60 Series proves that reliability doesn't have to come at the cost of speed. Each tool reflects the brand's Italian engineering and attention to detail — qualities that keep workshops running smoothly. In a trade where speed, accuracy, and reliability count, GAV delivers where it matters most.

Made from highly wear-resistant materials and equipped with high precision mechanisms, GAV tyre inflating guns ensure reliable measurements even under intensive use conditions.



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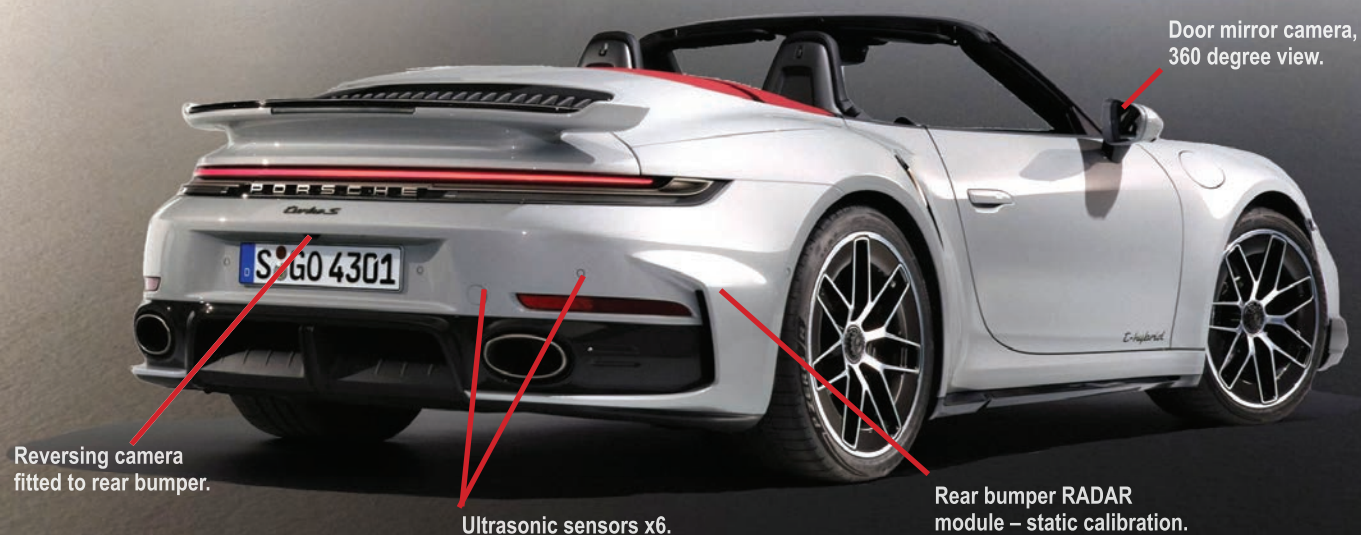
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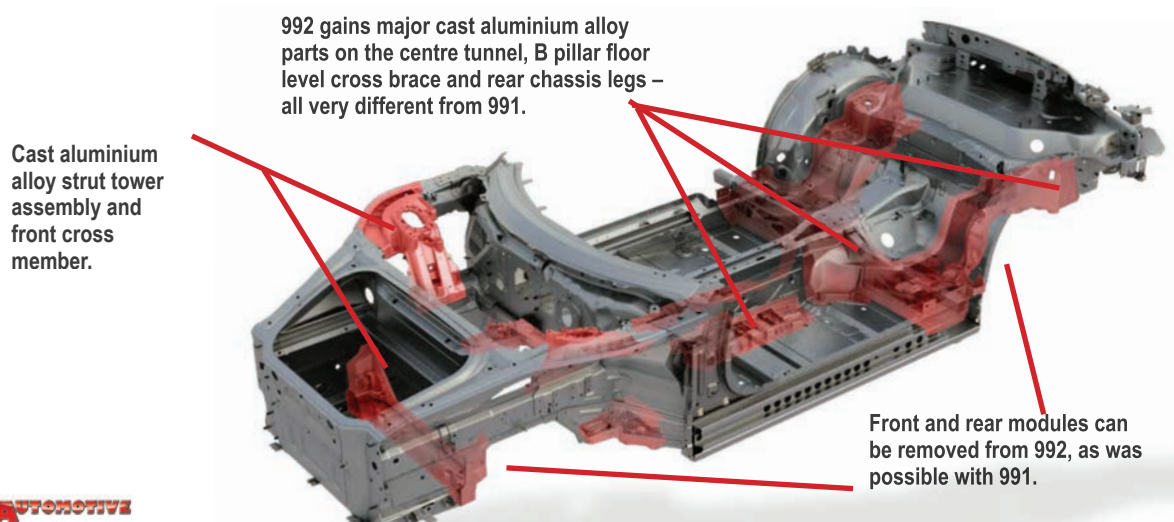
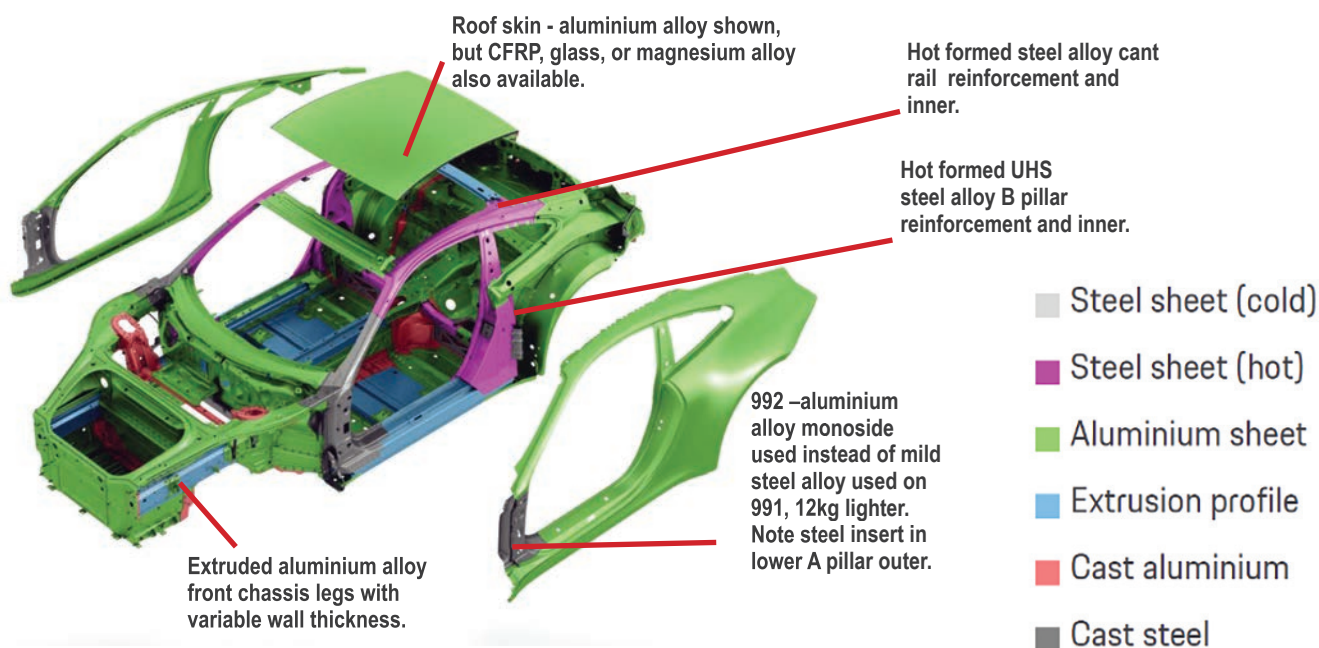
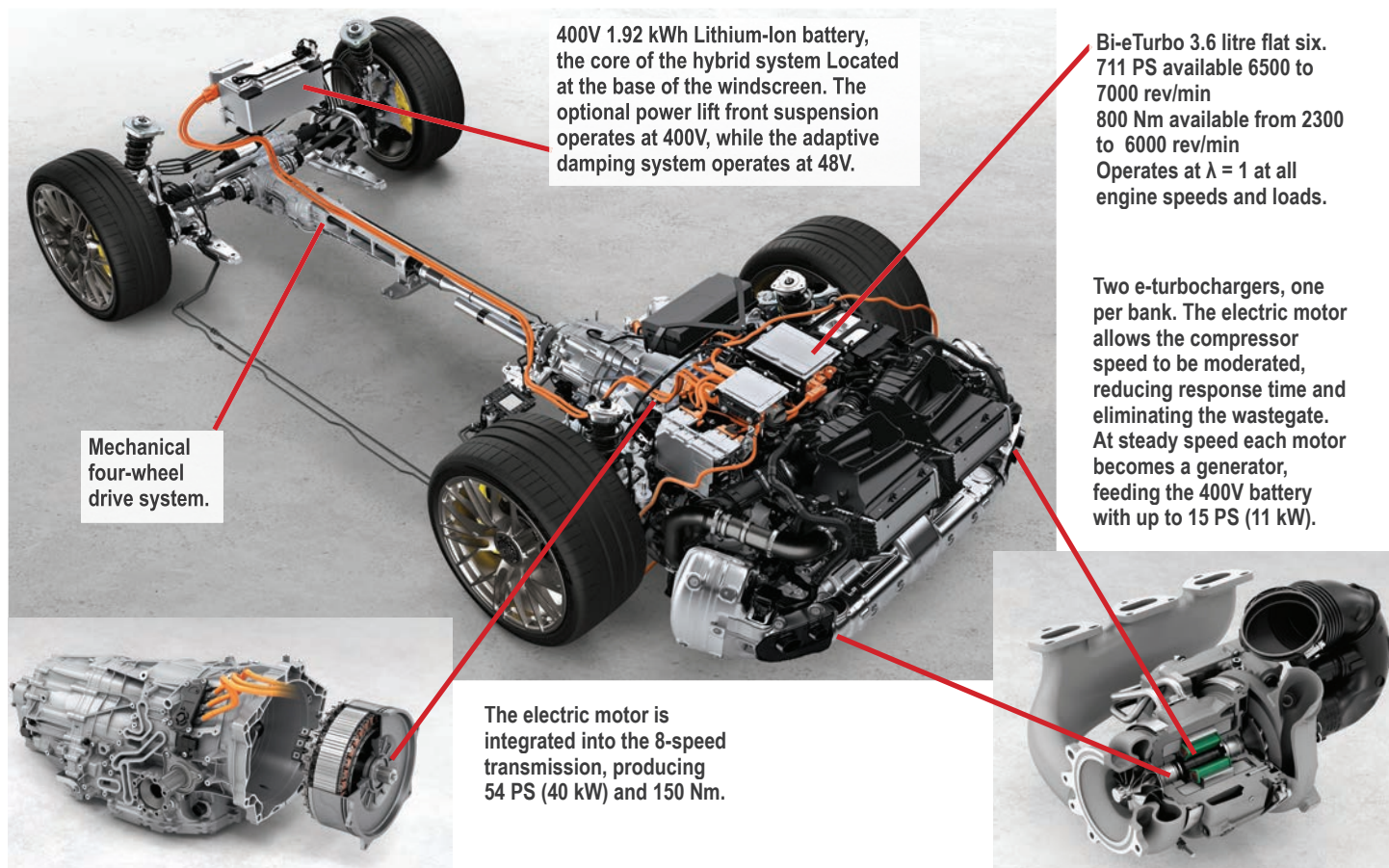
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WHAT'S HOT?

HARNESSING ON-THE-SPOT EVALUATION REMAINS PARAMOUNT

On-the-spot evaluations are a simple process, but they require a level of baseline knowledge and awareness to be the most effective. On-the-spot evaluations is any instance in which a technician must decide for some repair operations that are unique to that vehicle's needs.

With the increasing complexity of vehicles, these kinds of evaluations are becoming more prevalent than ever before. On-the-spot evaluations are almost essential for every repair and every step of the process.

That mindset should always be floating, at every point of the damage assessment. When you are adding lines to that estimate repair plan, keep in mind, not everything generates or populates as one would think. So you have to kind of click on an operation, confirm it is, in fact, populating a time that you see on the screen. Keep that mindset throughout the process.

The problem

On-the-spot evaluations are a simple process, but they require a level of baseline knowledge and awareness to be the most effective.

An all-too-common issue that repairers face when a vehicle rolls into their shop is that estimating systems (Solera, Audatex, etc.) can't account for every variable in repair.

For as powerful and useful as those tools might be, they are not going to be able to figure out what condition the vehicle is in when it enters the shop; they won't be able to tell whether or not the electrical systems are working, what scan tool (or tools) will be necessary, which ADAS systems are affected, and much more.

Those operations, many times, are not defined by a published time because of variables known in the environment. There is just no way for an information provider to confidently say, okay, to scan this car, it's always going to be this set time in a collision repair centre.

The solution

The solution, then, is an on-the-spot evaluation. Let's look at this example – the issue of blending in refinishing. For a long time, the industry has been at an impasse about how much time is needed to perform a blend on a panel.

Information providers used to provide a formula at the time stating if you are going to blend – finish a panel, you would receive a calculation of 50% (for stage two) of the refinish time that was



allowed in the system. The industry was at a disagreement, and there is just no way you can perform this operation in that given time.

The Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) performed a study in which they found that there were too many variables for blending to be distilled down to a formula and that on average, blending a panel takes close to 32% more time than does a full refinish. Some of the estimating tool companies removed the formulas from their tools and now when a vehicle has sections that need to be blended, those estimating platforms recommend on-the-spot evaluations for each scenario.

The repairer can assign a time that they feel is reasonable to perform that operation. You should also keep in mind that there is another entity typically involved, which is an insurance company, which can also have input on what that time should be as well, right? So, this on-the-spot evaluation could be from two angles over a single car in question.

Scanning operations are another common example of when on-the-spot evaluations would be necessary.

Every car in a collision will require a scanning operation to pre-scan and process scan. Since none of the manufacturers define what that time is or none of the information providers define that time, that is going to be a definitive situation where a shop can determine an on-the-spot evaluation. It is really going to come down to the shop making that final choice.

The aftermath

Your shop is rarely the only party that is dealing with a customer during the repair process.

On-the-spot evaluations require a strong technical understanding of each aspect of the repair, and it also requires being able to communicate that understanding to both insurers and your customers.

There is always going to be pushback when you are advocating for more time for repairs, but that having the knowledge to accurately and confidently defend your position is essential.

Being technically savvy and knowledgeable is a huge detail and if you don't understand the process with confidence, and you are being questioned, the hesitations can create fear and anxiety, and you won't be able to stand by what you are actually billing for.

UK NEWS

MOTOR INSURANCE PREMIUMS INFLATED BY BAD INDUSTRY PRACTISES

by Alan Feldberg



The Financial Conduct Authority has said high motor insurance premiums are partly down to the way insurers manage claims.

It said that motor insurance prices have been driven up by the rising cost of claims, which is the result of higher labour rates, higher energy costs, increasingly complex vehicles and the cost of hire vehicles.

The cost of theft claims, and, uninsured drivers has also risen significantly.

However, the FCA also found that referral fees from credit hire companies and accident

management companies have contributed to slower claims processing and therefore higher costs. It said it is taking direct action against companies where it had identified bad practises and would provide this evidence to the government as part of its motor task force, which was set up to understand the reasons behind high motor insurance premiums to take steps to reduce them.

A fair deal

Sarah Pritchard, deputy chief executive of the FCA, said: "Insurance provides peace of mind, but people must be confident they can

get a fair deal and be treated right when the worst happens. External cost pressures are primarily to blame for recent motor premium increases, not increased firm profits, but there is some more work to do on claims handling. "That's why we're stepping up, making sure claims are handled promptly and fairly and pushing for a co-ordinated effort to tackle the root causes of rising motor premiums."

A well-functioning insurance market helps consumers navigate their financial lives and supports growth by building people's resilience to financial and personal shocks.

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DRIVEN

NISSAN NAVARA STEALTH



Nissan Navara Stealth, proudly built in South Africa, has long set the standard for everyday reliability, versatility, and performance on African roads. Now updated and refined, the new Stealth looks tougher, drives smoother, and packs in more features for daily drivers and weekend adventurers alike.

The new Navara Stealth lives up to its name with sleek blacked-out trim detailing and orange accents on the front bumper, side steps, and mirrors with LED headlights adding to its stealth-like appearance.

The Stealth is well equipped with a nudge bar and sports bar as standard spec, and distinctive Stealth badging distinguishes it from the rest of the Navara range. Large 17-inch black alloy wheels with all-terrain tyres really finish off the tough look.

Under the bonnet is Nissan's trusted 2.5-litre turbo diesel engine, delivering 140 kW of power and 450 Nm of torque which is more than enough muscle for towing, carrying loads, or tackling tough trails. Fuel consumption was 10.3 litres per 100 km, not too bad for such a large vehicle!

Power is delivered through a smooth changing seven-speed automatic transmission which felt strong and reliable. The Stealth comes in 4x2 (rear-wheel drive) and 4x4 (four-wheel drive) versions, giving buyers options based on their driving needs and budget.

Inside, the Stealth feels premium thanks to black leather-trimmed seats, door panels, and armrests. A larger touchscreen infotainment

system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay dominates the centre of the dash and provides all the connectivity you need to run your apps with USB-C ports in the front and rear, to keep everyone's devices charged. Despite this, the Navara Stealth does still feel a bit old tech, but perhaps that's considered for the market it's targeting.

The system also includes a reverse camera and rear parking sensors, making tight parking spots much easier to handle. The Stealth is also equipped with six airbags and other important safety features to keep you and your passengers protected. Keyless entry and a push-button start together with a quality sound system add to the overall ease of ownership experience.

One of the Navara's standout features is its coil-spring rear suspension, which gives it a noticeably smoother ride. Whether you're driving on tar or tackling rough gravel roads, the Stealth offers confident handling and a comfortable drive. The return of the Stealth also highlights the strength of Nissan's Rosslyn plant. This locally built model proves the factory's ability to deliver custom variations like the Stealth without slowing down production. It also opens the door for exports across West and East Africa.

The Stealth now joins the Navara Warrior and PRO-4X as part of Nissan's growing line-up designed specifically for African conditions and customers. Prices start at R695 200 for the 4x2 and R779 200 for the 4x4.

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WHAT'S HOT?

TOP SUMMER TIPS FOR AUTOMOTIVE REFINISHERS FROM SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

As temperatures rise, automotive refinishing becomes more challenging. High heat can impact everything from product performance to application results. To help refinishers maintain top-quality results through the summer months, Sherwin-Williams has compiled some essential tips and practises to keep your finishes flawless and your shop efficient, even in the hottest conditions.

Choose the right hardener and thinner

One of the most critical steps in summer refinishing is selecting the correct hardener and thinner based on ambient temperature. Slow hardeners and thinners are specifically formulated for higher temperatures, allowing for proper flow and levelling without rushing the cure process.

However, consistency is key. If you opt for a slower hardener, always pair it with the matching thinner. Mixing mismatched components can lead to gloss retention issues or undesirable surface imperfections. Be sure to consult the product's Technical Data Sheet (TDS) for the recommended combinations if you're unsure.

Minimise thinner use in clear coats

When working with clear coats in high heat, it's best to use the minimum amount of thinner permitted by the mixing ratio. Excessive thinner, especially in hot conditions, can cause the clear coat to dry too quickly, leading to dry spray or poor flow. Staying within the lower range of the TDS-specified ratio helps to maintain better control and finish quality.

Avoid direct sunlight on products

Never store paint products, thinners, or hardeners in direct sunlight. Exposure to heat and UV rays can change a product's viscosity and chemical balance, affecting its performance. Always keep materials in a cool, shaded storage area, ideally within the temperature range specified by the manufacturer.

Also, remember to always replace the lid on hardeners as soon as possible after pouring. Exposure to air, even briefly, can cause chemical breakdowns, reducing the product's effectiveness and pot life.

Cool down the spray booth between jobs

Spray booth temperatures can rise significantly after each job, especially during back-to-back work in the summer. Cooling down the booth between cycles is essential to avoid carry-over heat affecting the next



application. Overheated panels can make it difficult for the paint to stay wet, leading to uneven finishes or dry spray.

Use a larger nozzle at high temperatures

In hotter environments, switching to the largest nozzle setup recommended in the TDS can make a noticeable difference. A larger nozzle allows for greater material output, which helps the paint remain wet on the surface and improves coverage. This is especially important for basecoats and clear coats where a consistent, wet film is crucial.

Use an anti-static cleaner for final wipes

Summer heat often comes with dry, dusty conditions. Static charges on panels can attract fine dirt and debris, compromising the finish. Using an anti-static cleaner as a final wipe reduces the attraction of dust and results in a cleaner, more professional outcome. It's a simple step that makes a big impact, especially on high-visibility panels.

Mix per layer for larger repairs

For larger repairs in high temperatures, we recommend mixing product per layer rather than preparing a full batch. Heat accelerates curing, shortening pot life

and changing viscosity mid-application. By mixing fresh product for each coat, you maintain the correct consistency and avoid issues like clumping, uneven coverage, or product waste.

Spray during the cooler parts of the day

Timing is everything in summer refinishing. Schedule painting for the early morning or late afternoon to avoid the peak heat of the day. Cooler conditions help maintain better control of viscosity, spray pattern, and drying times. Not only does this improve finish quality, but it also reduces stress on your team and equipment.

You could also coordinate your shop workflow to prioritise prep and non-paint activities during midday hours and reserve your spray booth time for when conditions are most favourable.

Summer refinishing doesn't have to mean compromised quality. By adjusting your materials, workflow, and application techniques, you can still maintain excellent results. Sherwin-Williams offers a full range of temperature-appropriate products and expert support to help you keep every job running smoothly, no matter the season.



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PRODUCT PROFILE

DAZE MASKING FILM

Qingdao Daze Technology recently acquired a masking film factory in China. Daze Masking Film is now part of their range of products that are on offer in China and globally.

Daze Masking Film is a semi-transparent, multi-layer, printable plastic covering. It clings to substrates to protect surfaces from overspray and other contaminants. It is ideal for quick masking of larger and small areas during painting. It is very versatile and can also be used in the industrial or construction industry for quick and easy protection.

It is statically charged for better adhesion and easier application. It is Corona treated so that it holds onto paint mist and dust while protecting the surface it's covering.

Daze Masking Film saves on time as it accelerates the masking process. The product is environmentally friendly as the plastic can be recycled and the packaging doubles as a dispenser. Thickness choices are 8µm to 13µm depending on your specific needs.

It is very important to note that before covering any surface the area needs to be clean, dry and thoroughly cured to achieve excellent results. Follow the simple instructions already on the masking film that says "paint this side" facing up and you're all sorted to start the job.

More information about Daze Masking Film can be found by contacting Neil Butterworth on neil@dazechina.com or sophie@dazechina.com.



Qingdao Daze Technology recently acquired a masking film factory in China.



Daze Masking Film is statically charged for better adhesion and easier application.



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WHAT'S HOT?

SAFETY AND SENSITIVITY ACHIEVED WITH SENSING TECHNOLOGY

Some sensor technologies are advancing and being developed to detect things from human facial expressions and mood, all the way down to electrical signals in the brain. IDTechEx's portfolio of Sensors, Haptics & Displays Research Reports demonstrates the vast array of sensing technologies currently being developed and used across many different sectors.

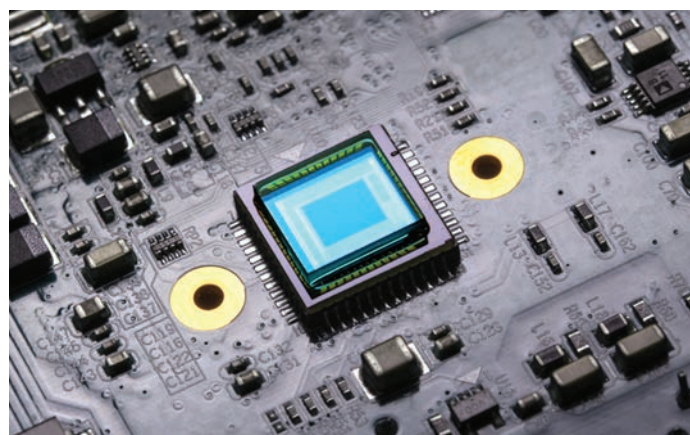
In-cabin sensing

Within the automotive sector, in-cabin sensing is made up of the driver monitoring system (DMS) and occupant monitoring system (OMS). The DMS is employed to detect the presence and alertness of the driver, such as with torque sensors on steering wheels for hands-on detection. RGB-infrared cameras are widely used as of 2025 to assess gaze and track head motion to make sure the driver is paying attention to the road. Time of flight (ToF) cameras and radar modules can be used in OMS for gesture control and occupancy detection, such as to ensure no children are left behind when the vehicle parks. IDTechEx's report, "In-Cabin Sensing 2025-2035: Technologies, Opportunities, and Markets", explores the DMS and OMS systems in greater detail, covering requirements and regulations surrounding the vehicle's system.

Sensors for EV battery health monitoring

Monitoring an electric vehicle battery's state of health requires a combination of sensing technologies and improved software. IDTechEx's report, "Advanced Battery Pack Sensors and Remote Monitoring 2026-2036: Technologies, Markets and Forecasts", explores improvements in battery pack sensors in more detail.

Temperature, humidity, moisture, stress, pressure, and the presence of gas, are all variables that can be measured by sensors within a vehicle's battery pack. Thermocouples and thermistors are two means of measuring temperature, while for gas detection, many solutions are entering the market, including chemi-resistors, thermal conductivity sensors and electrochemical sensors. Pressure building within a battery can be detected by more traditional means, such



as piezoelectric, piezoresistive, or capacitive sensors. All of these can help to ensure the vehicle remains safe, keeping passengers out of risk even in extreme circumstances through early warning of thermal runaway and battery degradation.

Consumer wearables and health tracking

One of the main roles of sensors is to convert input data into a readable measurement. Consumer devices is a hugely popular use of sensing technology. Wearable devices such as smartwatches that can detect heart rate and step count, and smart rings for sleep and fertility tracking, are two examples of how discreet sensors can be, and how they have become a large part of personal health tracking. IDTechEx's report, "Wearable Sensors Market 2025-2035: Technologies, Trends, Players, Forecasts", covers an extensive list of wearable devices that are making waves within the sector.

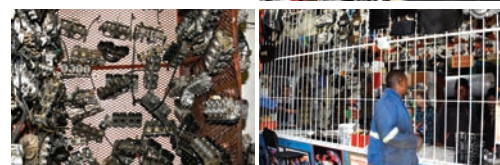
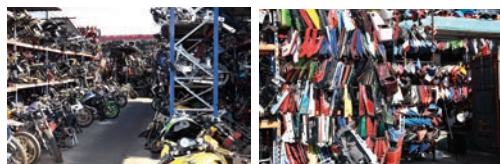
Quantum technology and increased sensitivity

Quantum sensors offer a whole new level of sensitivity that can't be achieved with ordinary sensors. Atomic clocks, quantum magnetic field sensors, quantum gravimeters, inertial quantum sensors, and single photon detectors, are some examples of quantum sensors explored in IDTechEx's report, "Quantum Sensors Market 2026-2046: Technology, Trends, Players, Forecasts", each serving unique purposes across many applications.

IDTechEx reports that fields such as aerospace and defence are likely to create demand for high-value sales for quantum sensors, such as for secure navigation, alongside quantum computing, and healthcare sectors for brain scanners. Many developments are still being made within the quantum sensor space, but IDTechEx's research showcases where there is the potential for growth and maturity over the next two decades.

For more information on sensing technologies, visit IDTechEx's portfolio of Sensors, Haptics & Displays Research Reports for research spanning automotives, consumer devices, and quantum computing.

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WHAT'S HOT?

MODERN CAR PAINT: WHAT EVERY DRIVER SHOULD KNOW



When it comes to buying a car, colour often seals the deal. Today's motorists are spoiled for choice with a dazzling array of paint options – from bold metallics to sleek matte and multi-layer tri-coat finishes. But while colour may be what catches the eye, few consumers realise that not all automotive paint is created equal – and choosing (or repairing) the wrong one can come with hidden costs and complications, especially if your car isn't finished in a standard colour.

Specialty paint options, such as metallic or pearlescent finishes, often come with additional costs. Kevin Abrahams, Associational Representative and paint specialist says these premium colours can add thousands of Pounds to the price of a new car and when it comes to maintenance and upkeep, they often require more meticulous maintenance. For instance, matte finishes are particularly delicate and can be challenging to clean and repair. "Sunlight, weather and washing can cause these special colours to fade slightly over time and in the event of a touch up, finding an exact match can be tricky."

"Modern paints are no longer just about colour – they're about chemistry and technology," says Abrahams. "Tri-coat finishes, for example, use multiple layers including tinted basecoats, pearlescent midcoats, and clearcoats to achieve depth and shimmer. These systems are difficult to replicate without the correct OEM-approved products and equipment." Then some custom or limited edition colours, are exclusive to certain models or years and may not always be readily available so they will need to be custom mixed directly from the manufacturer which all adds to costs down the line. Matte paint is notoriously hard to repair. "Any

polishing or blending can affect the finish, often requiring full panel, or in some cases, a full car respray. Typically, the more standard colours like white, silver etc are easier to match and also easier when it comes to resale," he says.

"Modern automotive refinishing is incredibly specialised," says Abrahams. "It's not just about spraying on a colour that looks right – it's about using cutting-edge paint systems, following strict manufacturer specifications, and ensuring expert application for a finish that's durable, precise and safe."

Advancements in automotive coatings include high-solid (HS) and ultra-high-solid (UHS) clearcoats for improved durability and gloss retention, low-VOC (volatile organic compound) systems for environmental compliance, and UV-cured primers for faster drying times. Some manufacturers now incorporate self-healing clearcoats and ceramic infused layers to improve scratch resistance and longevity.

These days all professional body shops or automotive refinishers should have professional colour matching tools. But even with this technology, blending into adjacent panels may often be necessary to create a seamless experience.

"Regardless of the type of paint colour you may have, it is still essential if your car needs repairs, to ask the right questions – both of your insurer and your repairer. "It is not only colour matching that's key – paint quality is also key."

Key questions to ask before your car is repainted

- Can I choose my own repair shop? Yes, you can. While your insurer may recommend a repairer from their network, you're entitled to choose your own – ideally one accredited by SAMBRA. These repairers meet high

industry standards and follow manufacturer guidelines. We suggest you do your research too and check for any customer comments/complaints on their socials or on Hello Peter before you commit.

- Will OEM-approved paints be used? This depends on what the insurer has authorised. But rest assured – all SAMBRA-accredited shops provide a warranty on paintwork, workmanship, and parts supply.

- What if the colour doesn't match or the paint job looks poor? You have every right to return the vehicle to the repairer to rectify the issue. If it's still not right after a second attempt, you can go to another accredited shop – and the original repairer may be liable for the costs. Quality workmanship is non-negotiable," says Abrahams.

- Will using a non-approved repairer affect my resale value or insurance? Possibly. Repairs that don't meet OEM standards or use sub-par materials can impact both resale value and future claims. That's why it's crucial to use reputable, accredited repairers who follow the guidelines as set out by the Competition Commission and follow industry best practices.

"In the end, what might seem like a simple coat of paint is, in fact, a highly technical, multi-layered process that requires precision, expertise and the right products. So whether you're driving a vibrant new model or maintaining a beloved older vehicle, understanding the nuances of automotive refinishing can save you time, money and frustration in the long run. Always choose accredited repairers, ask the right questions, and never underestimate the value of a quality finish – it's not just about looks, it's about preserving the integrity, value and safety of your vehicle," concludes Abrahams.

UK NEWS

US TARIFFS TRIGGER OEM RECALIBRATION

The 25% U.S. tariff on foreign vehicles and parts has created uncertainty for Asia-Pacific (APAC) vehicle manufacturers heavily reliant on the U.S. market. Hyundai, Subaru, and Toyota face rising costs and pressure to adjust production strategies. A temporary 90-day hold on the tariff, announced on April 9, 2025, offers short-term relief as trade negotiations continue. Hyundai's U.S. exports make up 16% of its volume, Subaru 32%, and

Toyota 5%, making them particularly vulnerable. In response, Subaru warned dealers that pricing may change, Hyundai introduced a Customer Assurance programme, and Toyota – already with strong U.S. production – plans no price increases but will cut fixed costs. According to GlobalData, APAC manufacturers are preparing for longer-term shifts in global trade and manufacturing strategies as the situation evolves.





A QUICK GLANCE AT SEMA 2025

The 2025 SEMA Show once again proved why it's the industry's premier stage for innovation, with a whole week of major announcements, product launches and exclusive vehicle unveilings lighting up Las Vegas, November 4-7.

From bold new builds to first-to-market technologies, exhibitors utilised the SEMA Show to unveil the ideas and products that will define the year ahead. The official SEMA Show Press Conference Schedule and the SEMA Live presented by AutoZone livestream featured back-to-back sessions from the industry's leading innovators, offering media and attendees a front-row seat to the announcements shaping what's next in performance, customization and vehicle design.

Each press event gave attendees the chance to witness headline-making reveals before anyone else, spotlighting everything from cutting-edge tools and performance parts to futuristic concept vehicles and advancements in manufacturing and materials. The result: a Show floor buzzing with excitement, collaboration and a shared look toward the future of the automotive aftermarket.

New models showcased

Ford showcased a Ford Custom Garage Project Vehicle, courtesy of Ford Performance Parts: the Ford Maverick 300T. And Ford plans to make a version of the 300T project kit available to customers in 2026. It adds an estimated 300 horsepower and 430Nm of torque - that's an extra 40Nm on the normal model!

Stellantis debuted two new concept vehicles: the Moparized Ram 1500 and the Moparized Dodge Charger. The Dude Ram concept embodies the sport truck persona of the Ram brand by combining a design theme inspired by a popular sport trim package from the early 1970s with a performance-oriented and aggressively lowered stance for the street.

For this year's SEMA Show, Nissan's special builds were based on the "effortlessly capable" Armada full-size SUV, the "rugged and right-sized" Frontier pickup, the "adrenaline-pumping" Z NISMO sports car and the legendary Patrol off-roader.

Battle of the Builders

Troy Trepanier was crowned the overall winner of the 2025 SEMA Battle of the Builders competition with his stunning creation, a '36 Ford roadster named "Fenderless." Trepanier won the Hot Rod/Hot Rod Truck category and edged out three other class champions, Tim Franklin (Sport Compact/Import Performance), Ron Jones (Off-Road) and Thomas Dickerson (BFGoodrich Young Guns), to secure the overall title.

Trepanier, a fixture in the custom car world, returned to the top of the industry's most prestigious builder competition eight years after winning the Battle of the Builders title in 2017. His latest build captivated judges and fans alike at the 2025 SEMA Show with its flawless craftsmanship, balanced design and innovative engineering.

"It was great to be back in the SEMA Battle of the Builders contest. It has grown a lot since we first won the event eight years ago," said Trepanier. "We finally had a car worthy of being back in the competition. There were so many great cars this year. Everybody was a winner: the Top 40, Top 12 and especially the final four."

Completed in January 2025, Fenderless is a completely scratch-built vehicle designed to resemble a vintage Ford roadster, but with every dimension reworked to achieve ideal proportions as an open-wheel car. Every major component of the project was fabricated in-house by Trepanier at Rad Rides in Manteno, Illinois, including the body, chassis, suspension and all machined parts.



WHAT'S HOT?

AWS GEN AI IS REWIRING DRIVING EXPERIENCES



The automotive world is no stranger to transformation. From electrification and autonomy to connected services and advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), each innovation has reshaped what it means to build, drive, and repair vehicles. Amazon Web Services (AWS) is now entering the fast lane with generative AI solutions designed to reinvent the in-vehicle experience. But what does this mean for the industry – especially those in repair, diagnostics, and aftermarket services?

Generative AI meets the dashboard

According to AWS's recent announcement, generative AI is being used to power a new wave of personalised, voice-driven, and predictive experiences inside the vehicle. This isn't just Alexa in a new wrapper. Instead, think of AI co-pilots that understand driver intent, learn preferences, adapt to the environment, or suggest services in real-time.

Imagine this: A customer enters their vehicle and is greeted by name. The AI notes their calendar and the weather and adjusts route planning and cabin temperature accordingly.

If a mechanical issue is detected, the system not only alerts the driver but also books a repair with a trusted local garage – including pre-authorisation from their insurer.

This is the kind of intelligent orchestration AWS is promising through its ecosystem of tools, such as Amazon Bedrock and Amazon SageMaker, combined with automaker-specific integrations.

OEMs, tier 1's, and the API revolution

AWS's strategy hinges on opening infrastructure and APIs to automakers and their Tier 1 suppliers. The goal? To allow seamless development of in-vehicle experiences that aren't just infotainment systems but core components of the vehicle's operating logic.

This has massive implications ...

Data Ownership & Monetisation: Manufacturers can build proprietary user experiences while retaining control over vehicle and driver data.

Post-Sale Upselling: AI-driven systems can directly suggest subscriptions, maintenance packages, or partner services through the vehicle UI.

Life cycle Intelligence: Vehicle usage, driving behaviour, and service history can be continuously analysed to optimise performance and reparability.

What this means for UK repairers and service businesses

These innovations seem confined to big automakers. However, the ripple effects are very real for independent repair shops, insurers, and diagnostics specialists in the UK.

1. Smarter diagnostics equals more predictive workflows.

With AI monitoring vehicles in real-time, fault codes and anomalies can be analysed long before they become breakdowns. This means more customers show up with clearly identified repair needs, a shift from reactive to predictive maintenance.

2. Integration pressure on repair tools.

Expect growing demand for aftermarket tools that interface with these next-gen vehicle systems. Tools that connect to OEM cloud APIs, understand AI-generated fault reports, or synchronise with OEM service booking systems will dominate.

3. Insurer alignment and workflow automation.

AI will increasingly handle triage, estimate generation, and insurer pre-approval automatically. Repairers plugged into this ecosystem will see faster job allocation and smoother claims processing.

4. Cybersecurity and access controls.

Access controls will tighten with AI now embedded deep into the car's operational stack. Expect stricter guidelines from OEMs, possibly enforced by UK regulators, about who can interface with these systems and how.

A new battleground for brand loyalty

AWS's generative AI isn't just about convenience – it's about reshaping customer relationships. The in-vehicle assistant becomes the brand ambassador, maintenance scheduler, and even upsell agent. For automakers, this could become the key to retaining customers' post-warranty. For independent shops, it raises an important question: How do you stay relevant in a world where AI might route service traffic away from you?

The answer lies in integration, transparency, and specialisation:

Integration: Connect your services to OEM or third-party AI ecosystems.

Transparency: To remain a recommended partner, provide transparent, trusted pricing and excellent reviews.

Specialisation: Lean into the repairs OEMs struggle with or refuse to support directly (e.g., classic car restoration, EV battery reconditioning).

Final Thought: The tools may be cloud-based, but the impact is ground-level.

AWS is betting big that generative AI will be the new fuel of the automotive industry's software-defined future. This shift is both a challenge and a golden opportunity for the UK aftermarket sector. Those who adopt early, train their teams, and invest in interoperable tools will survive this transformation and lead it.

In this new era, it won't just be the cars that need calibrating; it'll also be the businesses behind them.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS



RESEARCH

IN THE UK, THATCHAM RESEARCH WELCOMES NEW LEGISLATION ON THEFT DEVICES

by Simon Wait

Thatcham Research has welcomed the government's new Crime and Policing Bill targeting electronic devices used in vehicle theft, while emphasising the need for a comprehensive approach to combat increasingly sophisticated criminal operations. The new legislation on theft devices, which will make possession of signal jammers and relay devices an arrestable offence, represents a crucial development in addressing the rising tide of technologically enabled vehicle crime.

Thatcham Research's specialist security team has worked with the Home Office to shape vehicle theft legislation, ensuring it effectively targets criminal tools while protecting legitimate automotive industry devices.

New legislation on theft devices

Richard Billyeald, chief research and operations officer at Thatcham Research, who collaborated with the Home Office on the Bill, reckons: "This legislation addresses a critical vulnerability in the current vehicle security framework. By criminalising the possession and sale of these devices, we're raising the stakes for criminals while protecting the legitimate automotive sector. However, vehicle security requires a multi-faceted approach of which device regulation is a part."

Latest security assessments reveal that organised criminal gangs have shifted their tactics, moving away from opportunistic theft toward sophisticated operations that exploit technological vulnerabilities. This evolution in criminal methodology has contributed to the insurance industry facing record claim pay-outs, with the latest insurance industry data showing motor insurance claims totalled a record £11.7 billion in 2024, and the average vehicle theft claim reaching £11,200 in the final quarter of 2024.

Billyeald continued: "Vehicle manufacturers have made significant strides in improving security over the past three decades, effectively shifting vehicle crime from low-level criminals to organised gangs. Our focus is now on disrupting theft pathways and devaluing stolen assets through technological innovation and cross-industry collaboration."

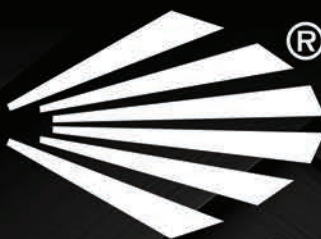
Enhanced security measures

Ongoing work with vehicle manufacturers has already led to enhanced security measures, including improved shielding against relay attacks and the integration of ultra-wide-band communication platforms. Vehicle manufacturers continue to develop advanced factory-fitted security systems for future models, demonstrating the industry's commitment to addressing these challenges.

Thatcham Research highlights that while the new legislation is positive, the organisation continues to collaborate with vehicle manufacturers and the police to address vulnerabilities, which forms only part of a broader strategy. Other elements include the development of remote inhibit systems, measures to prevent the transfer of stolen parts between vehicles, and continued collaboration between insurers, manufacturers, and law enforcement to identify and address emerging security threats.

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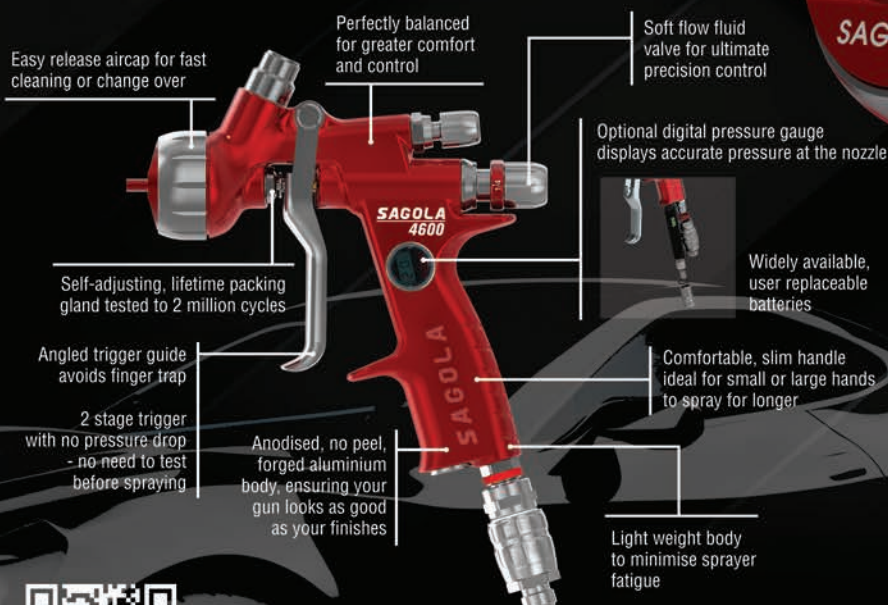
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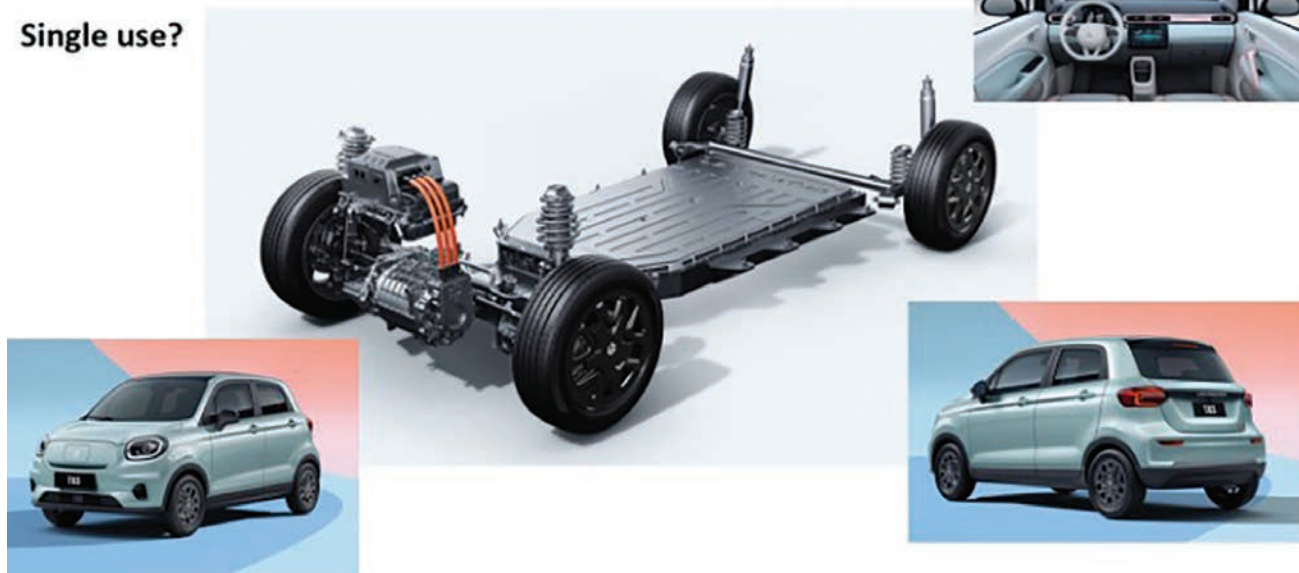
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SUSTAINABLE?

PROFITABILITY, PRODUCT COMPLEXITY AND REDUCED MARGINS

Europe's going to look into how events are shaping the automotive business. Let's consider the chaos in Europe caused in no small part by mandated battery electric vehicles ('BEV') along with the politically driven agenda to purge the internal combustion engine. ... at the very same time the 'overnight success' of China which has taken 40 years, finally arrived in Europe.

Firstly China

For many years China set the objective of building a domestic automotive sector capable of not only serving the domestic market but also for export. All sorts of routes were tried, leading to many mistakes along the way. Incentives were offered by provinces and domestic banks to 'invest' in the automotive sector. The result was extensive factory buildings operating far below capacity with products that were until around 2010 not quite world class.

One part of the plan that did work was to partner with non-China manufacturers, allowing up to date models to be built for China and to be exported too. Famous 'foreign' manufacturing partnerships included GM, Ford, Mazda, Honda, Toyota, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen Group and BMW.

Since that time the wider China economy has been transformed with significant increase of wealth for many. For the automotive sector this meant domestic demand increased significantly, along with integration of domestically designed / developed electronic systems into vehicles. This enabled fresh models with world class build quality.

Bigger is better

In 2024 the China automotive sector had:

Production: 26.76 million cars, 3.1 million LCVs and 0.99 million HGVs per year.

Factory space / capacity close to 55 million units per year.

These numbers seem not to include e-scooters.

China has few significant manufacturing facilities outside the country – so out of 75.5 million units built globally in 2024, around one third came from China. Will 55 million vehicles come from China eventually? No. Long ago most manufacturers understood it was way more cost effective to ship high value parts around the world rather than complete vehicles which contain a significant volume of air.

Investment in new products took off from around 2010, feeding an

ever-expanding market. The point where domestic brands were no longer seen as a low-cost alternative to imports or foreign company joint ventures built in China occurred around 2018.

China market peak profitability arrived around 2023, but there has been a massive internal market price war since then which has affected domestic, joint venture as well as foreign imported vehicles, with some international players such as Jeep electing to leave the market altogether.

With diminishing profitability in the domestic market, China automotive manufacturers have pushed for exports for to key markets in the EU27 and UK, expanding on conquests in the Norway (128,000 cars in 2024) and select African / Middle East markets. Why is export so important? Foreign exchange. Each vehicle sale realises a higher price than the present domestic market and provides vital alternative currencies.

The warnings

The China national government has issued many rolling 5-year strategic plans, expressing frustration with the modest returns for 40 plus years of support. Vehicles being built for export with almost no idea of how they would be sold. No brand. Just product.

The rebuke was to not to just fill up ships with vehicles but to start thinking about why conquest markets should buy those vehicles.

Early in discussions about EU27 tariffs for China built battery electric vehicles, BYD stated that even a 10 per cent import duty in addition to existing taxation could be taken without raising retail process and still turn a profit. The EU27 manufacturers knew full well that their margins are closer to 5 per cent, and so could not consider taking such a tariff without price increases for the consumer – a sobering moment.

EU27 Commission and law

As China found its feet, so the European tail pipe emission laws stumbled through – too late, too costly, too complex. Yet, at the same time, the very same people making laws are trying to ban some types pure internal combustion engine powertrains and promote BEVs without anywhere near enough infrastructure.

New model programmes were doubled or even trebled to address all the electrified and pure electric powertrain options.

Renault Twingo E-Tech revealed in production form on 6th November 2025: Based on the R4 and R5 BEV platform, with reduced parts count and a circa €20000 retail price. Will this be enough to answer the China challenge?



For EU27 manufacturers the burden of this activity against an ever-tightening time scale before taxation for producing the 'wrong type' of vehicle caused lasting damage. The manufacturers had enough – Euro 7 was publicly declined. The legislation was once again late, once again confused and now had a 3 year-ish life span before internal combustion engine phase out started in 2030.

The EU27 commission were not amused, but sat up when Germany, France and Italy pointed out the rejection was valid.

The confluence and some danger

On the one hand China has control of mining, processing and supply of key materials required for any sort of electrified powertrain, along with one of the largest domestic markets in the world. Yet, apart from SAIC via MG Motor and Maxus, for many years most of the China automotive sector was unknown to most of Europe.

The impact of purging the internal combustion engine powertrains, the incomplete infrastructure roll-out to support battery electric powertrains, the tripling of each new model introduction all served to slow down the European automotive sector, and helped China prepare to take market share by storm.

There is a large demand in China for basic transportation – vehicles that are seemingly well equipped with airbags but are closer to a quadracycle than a car. These products are already made in large volume, are very useful for running around, and could be sold at a profit with all duties paid for less than £10000. A lot less.

China is testing EU27 law for ultra-light vehicles – and if successful, will send many, many vehicles to Europe. The EU27 commission have known about the quadracycle problem for years, and some of the European built vehicles do not have front or rear end crush structures let alone airbags. If such inexpensive vehicles are released on the open market the result in congested towns and cities will make some sense – but no sense at all for use on higher speed routes.

Regardless of vehicle size, price cutting will bring the economic write-off point much closer to the first registration, possibly just a couple of years. Without radical engineering to make repairability inherently cheaper – something all manufacturers should consider – there is a risk more vehicles than ever before will be recycled not too long after they were first sold.

The first major casualty will be the franchised dealer. Already the main profit comes from used vehicle sales and servicing, and these activities do not need expensive brand themed buildings. The opportunity for collision repairers? To host vehicle sales direct to consumers, to repair vehicles – to take some 'land grab'.

Conclusion

On top of everything else, assessors will have to contend with new brands with a gaggle of models which have already been on sale for few years in China and supporting documentation which getting better with each new release. The vehicles are no less complex in any way than existing European products. The difficulty will be the effect on residuals which may accelerate the number of write-offs.

As never before, adherence to the law and application of knowledge by IAEA members will be very important not only for the damage assessment but the overall repair process.

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MOToring NEWS



WHAT'S HOT?

VOLVO IS INTRODUCING THE FIRST MULTI-ADAPTIVE SEATBELT TECHNOLOGY ON THE EX60 EV

by Mariella Moon

Volvo has introduced new seatbelt technology that can customise the protection it provides in real time. The "multi-adaptive safety belt" system, as the automaker is calling it, uses data input from both interior and exterior sensors to change protection settings based on various factors. It can take a person's height, weight, body shape and seating position into account, as well as the direction and speed of the vehicle. The system can communicate all that information to the seatbelt "in the blink of an eye" so that it can optimise protection for the passenger.

If the passenger is on the larger side, for instance, they will receive a higher belt load setting to reduce the risk of a head injury in the event of a serious crash. For milder crashes, someone with a smaller frame will receive a lower belt load setting to prevent rib injuries. Volvo didn't specifically say if the system also takes the position of a seatbelt on women into account, since it doesn't always fit right over a woman's chest. However, the automaker explained that the system expands the number of load-limiting profiles to 11. Load limiters control how much force a seatbelt applies on the body during a crash. Typically, seatbelts only have three load-limiting profiles, but Volvo expanding them to 11 means the system can better optimise the protection a passenger gets.

Volvo used information from five decades of safety research and from a database of over 80 000 people involved in real-life accidents to design the new safety belt. The system was also created to incorporate improvements rolled out via over-the-air software updates, which the company expects to release as it gets more data and insights.

"The world first multi-adaptive safety belt is another milestone for automotive safety and a great example of how we leverage real-time data with the ambition to help save millions of more lives," said Åsa Haglund, head of Volvo Cars Safety Centre. "This marks a major upgrade to the modern three-point safety belt, a Volvo invention introduced in 1959, estimated to have saved over a million lives."

Volvo engineer Nils Bohlin designed the modern three-point seatbelt and made its patent available for use by other automakers. The company didn't say whether it'll be as generous with the multi-adaptive safety belt, but the new system will debut in the all-electric Volvo EX60 mid-size SUV sometime next year.

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OEM OPERATION

HUMAN-ROBOT COLLABORATION IN AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

Yulin Wang, Senior Technology Analyst at IDTechEx



Collaborative robots (cobots), a type of lightweight and slow-moving robot designed to work next to human operators without a physical fence, have gained significant momentum thanks to their flexibility and the initiatives of bringing humans back to factories, industry 5.0, and many announcements from leading companies of reducing their carbon footprint. Cobots have found significant usage in the automotive industry for tasks ranging from car assembly to fasteners and surface polishing. These cobots have demonstrated significant cost benefits and efficiency improvements. IDTechEx's "Collaborative Robots 2025-2045: Technologies, Players, and Markets" report takes a deep dive into these tasks, along with their pain points, technical and commercial barriers, as well as future opportunities.

Tasks for cobots in the automotive industry

The automotive industry is the most prominent application of cobots. Cobots can be used for multiple tasks including car assembly (e.g., welding, assembling dashboards, etc.), Surface polishing, and screwing. With the increasing popularity of electric vehicles, many existing car product lines need retrofitting or reconstruction. Their key advantage lies in their ability to safely share workspaces with human operators. Unlike traditional industrial robots, which require complete isolation due to their speed, force, and potential safety risks, cobots operate at lower speeds and forces, with embedded safety features such as force-limiting joints and advanced proximity sensors.

A significant pain point for automotive OEMs is production downtime due to robot malfunctions. Traditional robots require complete line shutdowns for human operators to enter the working area safely. In contrast, cobots can allow partial line operations or rapid intervention, reducing the cost of downtime. For example, producing a Tesla Model 3 at the Fremont factory takes around 90 minutes. The revenue loss can be substantial if a robot failure halts production for even a few minutes. Cobots offer a way to maintain uptime and flexibility while ensuring safety.

Additionally, with the rise of electric vehicles (EVs), automakers must frequently retrofit or reconfigure existing production lines. Cobots' plug-and-play capability and easy reprogrammability make them ideal for adapting to new work flows without requiring months of custom integration.

Technical capabilities that make cobots different

One of the most defining features of collaborative robots is their advanced force and torque sensing capabilities. Cobots are typically equipped with six-axis torque sensors embedded at each joint, allowing them to detect external forces with high precision, often within a sensitivity range of 0.1 to 0.5 Nm. This capability enables real-time feedback control, allowing the robot to stop immediately when encountering unexpected resistance, such as contact with a human or an obstacle. This intrinsic safety mechanism is critical for close human-robot interaction and also enables fine manipulation tasks. For example, in surface polishing or delicate part insertion in automotive assemblies, cobots can maintain a consistent pressure (e.g., 5 to 15 N) across surfaces, significantly improving finish quality and consistency.

Another major enabler of flexibility in cobots is machine vision and AI integration. Vision systems - either built-in or modular - allow cobots to perform real-time image analysis for object detection, part orientation, and even quality control. High-resolution industrial cameras paired with AI models enable cobots to identify defects, adapt to varying part geometries, and even adjust their path or grip accordingly. For instance, cobots used in car dashboard assembly can dynamically locate and align with pre-installed components, increasing accuracy without relying on fixed jigs.

Ease of programming is another cornerstone of cobot design. Unlike traditional industrial robots that often require proprietary scripting languages and specialist programmers, cobots feature intuitive programming interfaces. Many offer graphical user interfaces (GUIs) with drag-and-drop logic, and some support manual "lead-through teaching," where an operator physically guides the arm through desired motions. This can cut deployment time by over 70%, and empowers shop-floor operators to reprogramme tasks without needing robotics expertise.

Finally, cobots support modular end-effectors, making them highly versatile. These tools - such as grippers, electric screwdrivers, welding torches, sanding attachments, or suction cups - can often be swapped within 30 seconds to two minutes using quick-change adapters. This modularity allows one cobot to perform multiple tasks in a production cell, enhancing productivity while minimising downtime and capital costs.

Story and pics by Stuart Johnston

CLASSIC CORNER

HERE COME THE 60'S

If ever there was a car that defined the best of American styling in the 1960s, that car was the Pontiac Tempest. Early in the decade Pontiac launched the Tempest as a compact car, which to almost everyone else in the world meant it was bigger than anything produced elsewhere, but not as huge as the biggest. From 1965 onwards, however, the Tempest had grown to what the Americans labelled as a “mid-sized” car, which meant it was now getting seriously big.

It wasn't the size that defined the Pontiac Tempest, though, it was its curvaceous coke-bottle flanks. This particular car is a 1967 Pontiac Tempest Le Mans convertible, one of just over 9 000 produced in 1967, which means it is pretty rare by American standards. And in convertible form, the Tempest Le Mans at 206.6 inches in length (5.2 metres), gave just the right sweep to that coke-bottle curve line, curving gently up from the trailing edge of



the door, before reaching its highest point before the wheel arch below.

From there it was a gentle descent to the long overhang of the tail section, an expanse of metal unbroken apart from the three metal styling accents on the rear flanks, that were subtle by the standards that had been in full swing only half a decade before.

Balancing that coke bottle sweep perfectly was the clean, crisp styling of the front end, with its Pontiac signature stacked dual headlight arrangements on each corner. In keeping with the clean, understated form of the flanks was a radiator grille neatly divided into two sections, and the grille finished in matt black, to add further subtlety to the overall look.

Again, by American standards, the Pontiac Tempest Le Mans was the epitome of austerity, and what gave the Tempest range even more street cred, was the body style that launched Pontiac's most

famous model of all, the GTO.

The GTO had a 389 cubic inch (6,4-litre) V8 equipped in 1965 and '66 with a set of three twin-choke carburettors that created a legend that is still revered today. It was a classic case of a hot, large capacity V8 slotted into a (comparatively) lightweight body to create an instant performance car, and that GTO nameplate would come to define all that was best about the Pontiac Division of General Motors' vast automotive line-up well into the 1970s.

The second-generation Tempest Le Mans, built between 1965 and 1967, was considered a model for those customers who wanted the looks and the style of the GTO without the need for speed harnessed by the range-topping icon.

Thus the Tempest Le Mans convertible you see here is packaged with style uppermost in mind, and an electric-powered roof is merely the cherry on top of this stylistic masterpiece.

The engine fitted to this car is appropriately understated, for customers who preferred to become immersed in the scenery they were driving through, rather than trying to blast through to who knows where with wide eyes and whitened knuckles on the steering wheel. This car is fitted with a modestly-tuned 326 cubic inch V8 with a single two-barrel Rochester carburettor providing an adequate 250 horsepower (186 kW). By comparison, the GTO was endowed with 360 horsepower in its HO (High Output) version (268 kW).

With the Le Mans' modest 326 cube V8's torque peak of 450 Nm at just 2 800 rpm, there was no need for any trickery in the transmission department either, as far as the Pontiac Division was concerned. So both the sedan and convertible were supplied in standard form with a two-speed PowerGlide automatic gearbox that provided effortless if unspectacular thrust to the rear wheels located "somewhere back there".

The car we drove, belonging to Kobus Mostert of Sedgefield, was appropriately fitted with the power steering and power brake options for the '67 model year. And what this means in 2025, nearly six decades later, is that you have to learn pretty quickly that the steering is geared for many-many turns lock-to-lock, and although it takes hardly any muscle power, you have to crank in quite a few handfuls of rotation on that faux-wood-rimmed steering wheel to make sure you stay in the correct lane after negotiating a right-angled turn.

Once you get used to the steering, you find that this massive car is indeed effortlessly manoeuvrable, with a turning circle

far smaller than you might first suppose. As for the brakes, well, they are drums all round, so you have to anticipate that on some occasions one of the front brakes may exert more pressure than the other, so you have to be ready to apply the necessary corrections to the steering wheel.

Other than that, it's a case of unlatching the roof at the windscreen, sitting back as the sky unfolds in all its blueness above your head, and easing on the gas pedal to let the world begin wafting by you. I tend to drive these kinds of cars very slowly, because there is no point in trying to shave off a few seconds off your zero to 60 time (that's miles per hour, bub, not km/h) in a car that is configured to sit back and relax.

The electric roof works perfectly and tucks away neatly, and the only thing we forgot to do was lower the left-hand-side rear window down for our photo session drive-by shots, as you will notice here. Trust me that all the windows, like the roof, go up and down the way John Z de Lorean intended them to (John Z was one rung below God in the GM hierarchy at that stage, as head of the Pontiac division. The stir he created with configuring the GTO as the world's first muscle car would see him promoted to head up the whole General Motors conglomerate in the 1970s).

As for the rest, I enjoyed the subdued gold colour of this car's pristine bodywork, and also liked the GTO-look optional wheels fitted to the car, which impart just the right degree of understated seriousness to this 60s style icon.

If it were mine, I wouldn't change a damn thing. If unspectacular thrust to the rear wheels located "somewhere back there".





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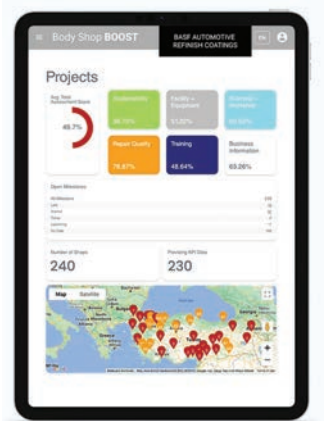
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Well, this was it. After years of planning and dreaming, the trip to see the sights of China and all the promise such as the famed Terracotta Soldiers, Ming Dynasty and the Great Wall of China were buzzing around in Auntie Val's brain.

The plan was simple. Val had to connect with her sister in Europe for the package tour and then fly to their Oriental destination for a 10-day look-see cultural delight trip into the depths of China. All this while her partner was working across in Europe to keep the home fires burning.

So, with bags packed and with great anticipation they met up with the tour leader at an airport in London; while rummaging through their eagerly awaited itinerary page-by-page to work out exactly how they would cope with it all.

This was a way to forget the huge cost and to justify the personal family indulgence – but their motivation was clear. The two girls were both in the autumn of their lives and didn't get to see each other that often so what-hell-lets-blow-it-all on the one great trip to China proved the motivation needed.

After many uncomfortable hours of bouncing around on the plane, and after yet another stop-over while recalibrating time zones, the party of 10 travellers landed in Beijing. The two gals had by this time

knocked back a fair amount of gin and tonics before they came-face-to-face with grim-faced immigration officials while they were hustled along with their hand luggage. The party split up into two to make progress a little easier; and her sister went stage-left into another queue.

“Standing in disbelief, she waved at her sister on the other side of the glass partition...”

Well, the real fun started when she came face-to-face with a chap who looked like a sumo wrestler who spent his spare time choking baboons. This gentleman scrutinised her passport and worked out that her specially obtained visa would expire one day before they were due to leave the Republic of China and out came the yellow card. She could not come in and was granted person non-grata status.

Standing in disbelief, she waved to her sister on the other side of the glass partition who was surrounded by other party travellers all wondering what the commotion was about and why she had burst into tears.

With much toing and froing watching closely the officials who simply sat around with their deadpan faces, she was summoned

to sit tight and return to Europe at her own cost. There was a desk that could have stamped a visa extension into her passport there and then, but they simply refused to offer any help and remained po-faced through it all. At that very moment she felt she would have preferred to be travelling in a third-class railway carriage through the desolate Balkans than being stateless in China.

The upshot of all this was her sister Sandra told the touring party to enjoy it all and she rejoined her sister. They sat and waited for seats to return them to Heathrow with a newly bought ticket for Sandra; costing another eleven grand on British Airways. All they could remember about their 'Oriental trip to paradise' was a bunch the unhelpful, and seriously unpleasant Chinese airport officials, before winging it homeward bound.

To cap all this holiday furore, eventually the pair travelled by rail down to a quaint seaside town in the West country of England, where the beaches were laden with summer visitors, little sand castles everywhere, sticks of rock, and endless donkey rides. Alas, this was not what they had signed up for but hey, the unfortunate happens and on this occasion it really did not work out to plan.

So with their cultural holiday package in ruins the pair made the best of it all with their sun hats, and playing bingo.



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