

Sportscar that thinks it's an SUV

Think of it as Q7 meets A3 and throw in a soft top for fun

BY MOTORING STAFF

Yep, there's another new Audi on the way and this one caters for those who want a bit of everything in their ride. The Cross Cabriolet quattro is what you could call a melting pot of cars, with a drop-top roof fused to a two-door body, mounted to an SUV-like chassis featuring Audi's quattro all-wheel drive system. Think of it as - Q7 meets A3, and throw in a ragtop for good measure.

As you've probably already guessed, the Audi Cross Cabriolet quattro is still only in concept form, and it's on show for the first time as we speak, at the Los Angeles Auto Show. The new Audi ventures into a new realm of motoring, as soft-top convertible roofs have rarely, if ever been combined with an SUV type vehicle.

It's powered by a longitudinally



SHOWTIME: The Los Angeles Auto Show sees the debut of Audi's latest concept car, the Cross Cabriolet quattro. And, no, we don't know how to classify it either.

sensor field in front of the MMI control element that recognises and processes commands entered by tracing letters with your finger on the touch pad. Audi has also for the first time ever brought together the merits of the internet-based system Google Earth and its own built-in navigation system to find addresses or service providers at the chosen destination and navigate directly to them - for instance restaurants, car parks or an Audi dealer.

An internet radio system provides access to the countless radio stations broadcasting over the World Wide Web, and plays through a high quality Bang & Olufsen sound system.

By simply pressing a button, the user can give a positive or negative verdict on a music track. The system will thereafter only offer the user tracks and music styles that match his/her preferences.

Although it's still unclear as to when we can expect a real-life version of the Cross Cabriolet quattro, there's one thing we can say for certain - If it were a person it would be one mixed-up cat.

mounted six-cylinder TDI engine that pumps out an impressive 176kW and 500Nm. It accelerates from 0 to 100 km/h in a claimed 7.2 seconds with a top speed of 240km/h, while returning an average fuel consumption figure of 7.3 l/100km.

Audi's well known quattro permanent four-wheel-drive system

this time features an electric ride height adjustment to further enable the car to morph between sports car and SUV. It's also equipped with race car-like ceramic brakes on all four wheels that will bring it to a stop in a hurry.

The Cross Cabriolet quattro is the latest Audi to be equipped with full LED headlights, which also fea-

ture the characteristic strip of daytime running lights and the electronically controlled swivelling cornering lights. The turn signals, brake lights and tail lights also use fast-reacting LED light units. In addition to the front and rear lights, the exterior mirrors also have integrated turn signals.

Inside, it's got a touch-sensitive



CHINESE TAKEAWAY: McCarthy group believes a number of tweaks have now made the Meiya bakkie what it should be.

Meiya now on market

McCarthy finally launches its Chinese-built bakkies after false start

McCarthy Motor Holdings' Chinese-built Meiya range of diesel and petrol pick-ups is now available at the company's Value Centre outlets across the country with a choice of 2.2 petrol or 2.8-litre turbodiesel engines.

When McCarthy announced in April 2006 that it would be importing bakkies from China it said they would be released on the SA market during the first quarter of 2007.

That didn't happen because, according to McCarthy technical boffin Mike Dawson, the decision was made to re-test the bakkies here rather than submit the original Chinese type-approval certificates to the SABS for local homologation. The vehicles were also criticised by motoring journalists who drove them at the press launch in August. Our journalist Minesh Bhagaloo re-

ported there were "noticeable build-quality concerns like significant wind noise, interior panels not flush, and a generally wallowy road-holding feel - more disconcerting though was the tendency of the vehicle to veer under hard braking".

McCarthy staff went back to the factory in China and said: "Not good enough".

Higher quality-control standards were set, Meiya staff were brought to South Africa to work alongside the locals at a dedicated pre-delivery centre in Edenvale, near Johannesburg, and several pre-production batches of about 10 vehicles each were built and tested.

The velour upholstery (industry standard in China but impractical for SA) was replaced with better-quality fabric and plasticky, ill-fitting faux wood trim gave way to

more durable mouldings in dark plastic.

All of which delayed the SA release of the Meiya bakkies, said Dawson, but now, here they are. Meiya vehicles are sold with a one-year unlimited distance warranty. Servicing every 15 000km for petrol engines and 10 000km for diesels.

- Motoring Staff

Prices

Single cab
2.2 standard - R89 900
2.2 Deluxe - R106 900
2.8 Deluxe diesel - R129 900

Double cab
2.2 standard - R114 900
2.2 Deluxe - R126 900
2.8 Deluxe diesel - R149 900

Tata moves into lifestyle league

Limited edition Indian bakkie gets full luxury spec

BY MOTORING STAFF

Tata has introduced its first lifestyle bakkie to the South African market, the Xenon. It will not be replacing the existing Telcoline bakkie range; Tata say that the Xenon aims rather at the buyer looking for driving comfort and luxury with bakkie practicality.

On the menu are 4x2 and 4x4 double cabs powered by a 3-litre common-rail direct-injection turbodiesel engine good for 85kW and 300Nm of grunt.

Also standard are features like power steering, air conditioning, radio/CD/MP3 sound system, front and rear electric windows and rear folding seats.

On the safety side you can expect brake load sensing, central locking, and a safety cell made up of front crumple zones, a collapsible steering column, reinforced roll-over bar, inertia-reel locking on all the seatbelts and side intrusion beams.

The Xenon should make those fishing trips more enjoyable with its 4-wheel drive option that includes a "shift on the fly" feature that allows the driver to change into four wheel drive high range without having to come to a complete

stop. Low Range is also standard on the 4x4 models.

And in case your idea of fishing includes more than a little gravel, Tata has included 16-inch wheels, and an underbody skid plate that extends the full distance of the gearbox.

The rear differential incorporates a limited slip-diff (LSD) for better offroad and wet weather driving, and a reinforced suspension for good measure.

Styling cues according to Tata follow outer contours with an adventurous look, while the interior is said to be plush and comfortable. Optional extras include a nudge bar (with provision for spot lights), side steps, roll bar, rear step with a tow bar, and a tonneau cover.

As with most Tatas, pricing is rather keen. The 4x2 double cab will set you back R169 995, the 4x4 R25k more at R194 995. And to give that Meiya salesman a few more sleepless nights Tata have included a 3-year/100 000km manufacturer's warranty, a 3 year / 60 000km service plan and roadside assistance.

But best you get moving. The Tata boys are making only 100 units of the Xenon available locally due to huge overseas demand.



BRIGHT LIGHT: Tata has expanded its bakkie range with the launch of the Xenon.