

COLUMN
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WATTS

TAYCAN CAN



In a recent book, more than 40 Springbok rugby players will tell you that “Our Blood is GREEN.”

But the buck stops right there. The rest of South Africa is slow to get into the scrum of the green revolution – especially when it comes to motoring.

Around the world, electric vehicle (EV) sales have sparked by 41% during the pandemic and there are more than 10 million battery-powered cars silently traversing continental roads.

Except in Africa. Virtually all EV registrations are available in South Africa, where there have been a range of options since 2013, and total sales are a poultry (yes we are chicken) 1 500 or so!

It is not that manufacturers and marketers are not trying to convince us to plug in – the irony is that we have the fifth-best ratio of private charging stations to our number of EVs. However, although eight out of five people are bad at maths, I am sure you can see the reason why ...

Right now sales are improving around the so-called Premium sector – where price tags are in the millions. So if you have not been tempted by the Jaguar IPACE, maybe the Porsche Taycan Turbo S can get you off a fossil fuel diet.

I do not believe Porsche sports cars are moulded – they are artistically and tastefully sculpted. But, their first all-electric offering does have a whiff of the future about it. This striking, sleek four-seater would fit between a Panamera and a 911 and easily accommodates a two metre driver – maybe not quite so much headroom in the rear.

The interior is as luxurious and comfortable as you would expect with the digital world reigning supreme. You are surrounded by a curved instrument cluster and central touchscreen infotainment display.

Despite the fact that my kids call me stoneage.com, I think most drivers who swing into that exhilarating



cockpit for the first time will take a while to figure out the options.

Before setting out on a long test route, there was a stern warning to alert our codriver when applying a dose of right foot. It did sound a tad over the top. Well that is until you experience the immediate response that takes you to the ton in a blistering 2.8 seconds. Now that is similar to the petrol-engined 911 Turbo S and a host of the fastest supercars.

But it is those first few metres that equate to a skydiver in freefall and can leave you making an appointment with the physiotherapist the next morning. The only sounds you will hear are the whimpers of delight up front. All thanks to two electric motors and a two-speed transmission with “first gear” only coming into play when you are looking for a Formula One take-off.

Despite being a two-ton Tessie (no relation to Tesla) the All-Wheel-Drive and low slung battery leave you feeling confident behind the wheel and the available ceramic coated brake pads will bring you to an impressive halt in an emergency.

When you talk EVs, the most important are the R and C words. The claimed cruising range is 340 km – which will get you from Joburg to Harrismith. In fact, GridCars have got a charging network that will get you around the country on any major highway.

‘C’ is for charging time – you knew that. The good news is that the Taycan has pioneered 800 Volt technology that means the battery can be charged from 5% to 80% in a shade over 20 minutes.

What we may have forgotten is the ‘P’word. Electric vehicles are pricey. It is a combination of manufacturers having to tool up for a completely new architecture, lagging economies of scale, and in South Africa, higher import duties compared to internal combustion engines.

The authorities will have to come to the electric party very soon. Porsche are aiming at 80% EVs and the other 20% of their lineup running on biofuels in the next decade. That is very much the picture for other marques as well.

Petrol and diesel are a sunset industry and our leaders

will have to start looking at other means of bolstering the coffers. It is a process and will not be like turning on a light switch – the average car park is around 12 years old. But, we have to start looking at an electric future (Eishkom providing) and importing reasonably priced compacts along with healthy rebates. And at least Government and the local motor industry have started negotiations.

For the well-heeled, the Porsche Taycan Turbo S is an extremely attractive introduction to the green route. Going green does take greenbacks, and you will have to part with around R4 million. Or maybe the entry level Taycan at just over half the price ...and you will save on physio bills.

It is probably the biggest statement you can make on our roads this year.

