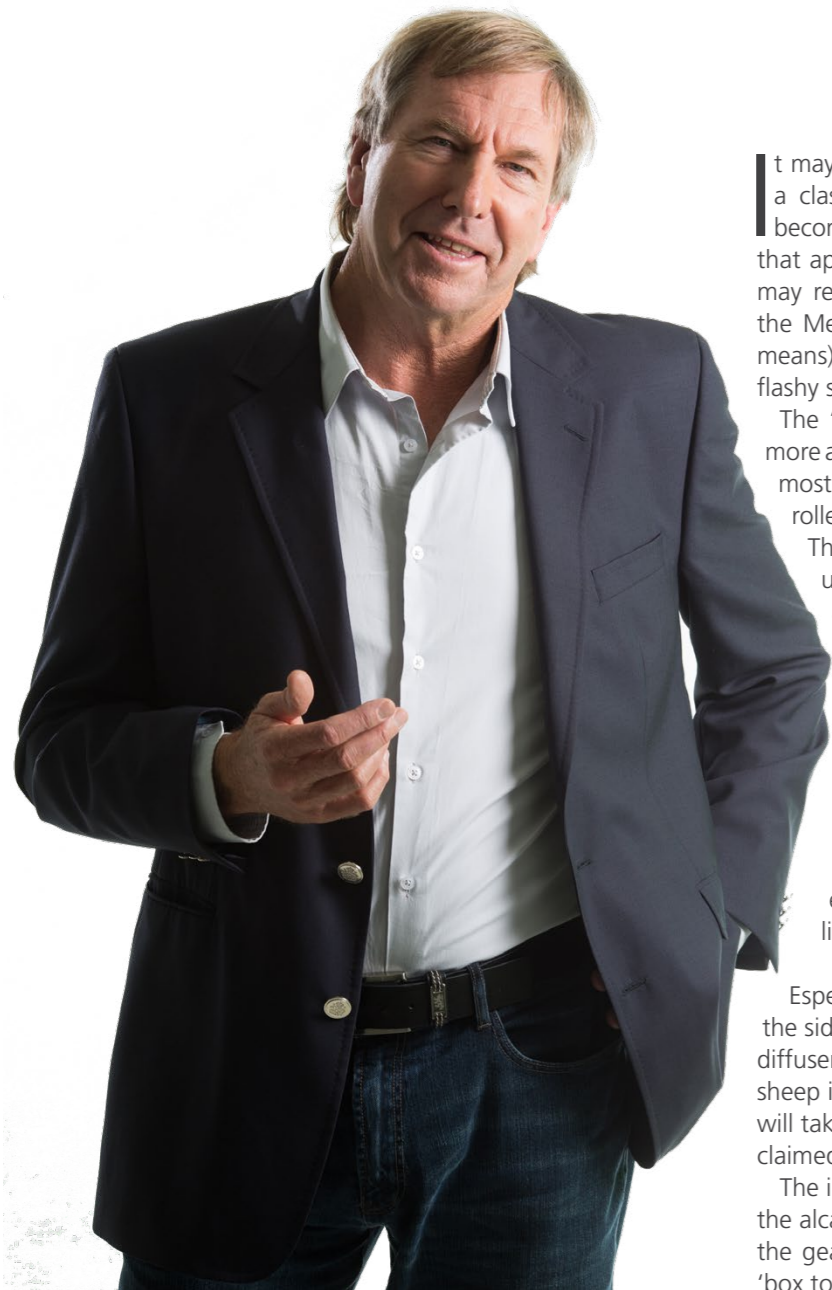


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GOLF RENOVATION AND RENAULT RENAVOLUTION



It may sound like a trick question – but can a car become a classic virtually at the same time it is launched, and become one of the very rare new generation vehicles that appreciates in resale value in the next few years? You may remember the times when you could get on top of the Mercedes or BMW launch list (sometimes by dubious means), drive in luxury for six months, and then sell your flashy steed at an astounding profit.

The “classic” I am talking about is certainly German but more a car of the people. The Volkswagen Golf has outdriven most rivals since the successor to the ubiquitous Beetle rolled off the assembly line in Wolfsburg in March 1974. The slogan “The new popular sport. Golf”, became an understatement. Over 35 million Golfs have been sold around the globe ...one every 41 seconds!

Switching from an air-cooled rear engine to a water-cooled front engine was a radical change at the time. However, we have now seen seven generations grow up on increasingly pot-holed South African roads and await the touchdown of Golf VIII launched in Germany late last year. But Golf7 was not about to bow out with a whimper. Rather with the VW brains trust of marketers and engineers dreaming up a menacing and mighty limited edition GTI TCR.

The Touring Car Racing model is not easily missed. Especially in Tornado Red with honeycomb stickers on the side, snarling splitters up front complemented by a rear diffuser and roof spoiler – all in gloss black. It is not just a sheep in “Wolfsburg” clothing. The tweaked twolitre turbo will take you to the ton in 5.6 seconds and flattens out at a claimed 264 km/h – and no, I did not reach that on the M1!

The interior is not quite as brash but boasts red stripes on the alcantara-and-cloth sports seats and scarlet stitching on the gearshift, which puts you in touch with a sevenspeed ‘box to get those front tyres smoking.



Along with a host of extras (including a panoramic sunroof) this ultra-hot hatch is yours for just R669k. Well, actually not. South Africa was allocated 300 individually numbered TCRs and apart from the three test cars (I tested number 300), they have all been sold. So look out for number 300 on the used car lot ...it has never exceeded the speed limit and you will be joining the “classic” TCR club.

From boy racer to country cruiser – although the mysteriously named Renault Koleos is more than a stylish and roomy SUV, it certainly is a far cry from their first foray into this market more than a decade ago! The Koleos has some unexpected talents off-road and even offers a “flick of the switch” 4x4 Dynamique CVT version that comes in at a shade under R565k. My test ran from the N1 highway to Polokwane through Tzaneen and on to some testing tracks around Hoedspruit and Ingwelala Game Reserve.

The brand is better known for budget wheels like the Kwid that was the third-highest selling compact in South Africa last year. Yet, the Koleos is anything but compact – it has abundant head and leg room all round, along with very useful boot space. The trade-off is that there are no extra folding seats in the dog box.

Not too many SUV designs take your breath away, but this model shows a touch of French flair with the snazzy grille surrounding the Renault diamond logo and large C-shaped LED running lights on the flanks. Renault is a brand on the move – even the diamond logo that has not changed since 1925, is undergoing a “Renavolution”. The upgrade in quality and technology hits you as you haul yourself into the generously specced and comfy cabin. In fact, the only realistic extra you have to ponder is the metallic paint.

Maybe linked to the fact that my children call me stoneage.com, it takes a while to work out all the bells and whistles. However, once you are in the zone, the world is at your fingertips on the vertical screen that supports Apple Carplay and Android Auto. An added bonus is no fighting in the back seat as passengers get two USB charging points and a 12volt socket.

What could possibly do with more of a charge is the 2.5 litre petrol engine. It is ample around town and on the cruise but the Continuously Variable Transmission (look Ma,

no gears) is not quite so smooth when trying to pass on the highway around the speed limit zone.

Groupe Renault is on the global warpath – not just to boost sales but increase profitability per unit in all markets. It is a tough balancing act in Covid times but it is this mid-priced sector that is pulling into focus as we try to stretch the Rand. So do not leave the Koleos off your new SUV shopping list!

