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# BUTTERFLY MASERATI



It is one of life's mysteries that while our space boffins look at terraforming Mars, we are still impressed with a relatively simple device invented nearly 70 years ago.

It is called a door. Or, to be more specific a scissor, beetle-wing, or switchblade car door that swings up rather than out.

It was pioneered at a production level by Mercedes-Benz with the 300 SL in the early fifties and is probably why you will pay so much for a "pre-owned" gullwing SLS AMG that was discontinued in 2015.

A number of new models, headlined by the new Pagani Huayra R, still opt for the winged look. Although you will have to be a highflier to fork out well over R50 million to get behind the wheel of *Maximus Supercarus*.

Now, there is another "butterfly winged" supercar about to touch down in South Africa. It is called the Maserati MC20 and according to the boss of the Italian marque, Davide Grasso, "It sets the cornerstone to build Maserati for the future."

Now under the rapidly expanding Stellantis roof, the plan is to triple sales within the next three years and 13 new models are on the drawing board with the MC20 the jewel in the crown.

The truth is that the MC20 has already "secretly" touched down on our tarmac. In fact, it covered more than 10 000 km in high-speed tests around Upington in sweltering Kalahari heat earlier this year while tests at the other end of the temperature scale were being carried out in icy Norway.

The two-seater coupé is the first supercar Maserati has produced since the limited-run MC12 launched in 2004 and what is remarkable is that it keeps that Trident identity as it flows back from the massive badge in what seems to be hand-sculpted artwork but is largely the result of virtual design and extensive wind tunnel tweaks.

Beneath that stunning skin is a carbon-fibre tub with aluminium sub-frames for the suspension and powertrain.



The engine, dubbed "Nettuno", is a homegrown 3.0 litre V6 that has borrowed some Formula 1 race tech and has surely benefitted from the previous relationship with Ferrari.

Paired to an automatic eight-speed 'box, it will take you to the traditional ton in a claimed 2.9 seconds along with the distinctive Maserati aural accompaniment.

The interior is defined as "luxury with a purpose". A clean, minimalistic racing layout with each component serving a practical purpose ... along with the latest touchscreen infotainment which hopefully would not distract you at 320 km/h!

Things have changed since Henry Ford and the Model T where the adage goes you could have any colour as long as it is black. It seems the iconic car was launched in a variety of colours except black.

Either way, the supercar salesmen of today talk about "bespoke" individually crafted interiors (and exteriors) which, stitch by stitch, help boost the bill. Maserati go beyond bespoke with the *Fuoriserie Collection* so you can mix Carbon fibre, leather, and Alcantara (a patented synthetic suede) to your heart's content. In fact, there are "no holds barred" and you could match the paint job to match the nail polish of your partner. On second thoughts...

Global Ambassador David Beckham apparently chose his MC20 in Bianco Audace (a fancy shade of white). I would probably go for the Blu Infinito. However, I do not think my bank manager would go for the price tag of around R5.5m.

Yet there are many monied motorists who will not blink at the price and the first four custom ordered MC20s will arrive soon. Sign up now and you could have this revolutionary Maserati in your garage within six months.

Nevertheless, for the moderately well-heeled with offspring and dreams of owning the three-pronged spear ... hope is not lost.

The new Ghibli Hybrid surely presents the most status per Rand you can buy right now. This elegant and generously proportioned four-door luxury sedan is smoothly and swiftly propelled by a 2.0 litre petrol turbo engine with a 48 Volt system that drives an electric supercharger.

That sounds very technical because it is. However, all you need to know is that you do not have to plug it in to a socket and you will be getting unexpected power and performance from this electronic wizardry when you need it most.

While you will not suffer from whiplash, the pedal response is instantaneous and the ride is velvety but tightens up a tad when you press the Sport button.

The cabin is modern but has touches of old world charm – like the clock perched on the top of the dash. The rather intuitive infotainment department is bang up to date with Apple Carplay or Android Auto on tap while your cell phone charges automatically on a handily placed pad.

On a trip to Gauteng's answer to Table Mountain and the Atlantic seaboard – the majestic Hartbeespoort Dam – the admiring glances belied the starting price of R1.642m.

You can expect to forfeit a dowry of three times that figure to marry into the top end of the Italian families. Nevertheless, this scaled down Maserati Quattroporte is a very classy cousin with ambitions of an electrifying future.

