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ELEMENTAL SPYDER



Blinding lights has caused many problems this year. If modern music is not your passion, it is a song by The Weeknd which, apart from the weird spelling, is not a group, rather a Canadian pop star, who broke chart records around the globe but was not nominated for a Grammy.

So, he boycotted the 63rd Annual Awards (presented by Trevor Noah) and said he would never allow his productions to be vetted by their "Secret Committees."

But Blinding Lights are not all secret. They have become a focal point of the motoring world for the past decade. We used to call it a dashboard when it was just a speedometer and fuel gauge.

Now "infotainment" seems to be the one word that covers everything from instrumentation graphics, which change to suit your mood and driving style, to a plethora of high-resolution screens offering every option except a fresh cappuccino. And I am sure manufacturers are working on that.

I have embraced the high-tech fascia revolution, spearheaded in the premium sector by MercedesBenz, and when we get autonomous vehicles (do not hold your breath) it would be great to settle in and watch a few Netflix series on the way to Cape Town.

The question is... why would a space age manufacturer with the highest profitability per unit in the world introduce a new model with very traditional instruments and controls along with a tiny screen?

Well Porsche, who recently decided that Elon, Richard, and Jeff cannot have the heavens all to themselves and invested a Billion Rands into a German aerospace start up, perceived that some clients might like to take a step back.

Not in performance, technology, or style ... but in pure motoring terms. They call it the Porsche Boxster 718 Spyder. "Minimised for pure driving pleasure."

But, if the art of minimalism is all about reduction, "less is more" and living with only the things you really need... I do



not think this is what the Stuttgart designers and engineers had in mind.

Because the 718 Spyder is a sculptured art piece itself. With the "part-manual" roof up or down. Although you may have to make a quick exit to lift the roof out of the storage compartment when the raindrops fall, do not dare refer to it as a rag top!

The front end of this mid-engine two-seater roadster is pretty much Porsche 911. *der Hintern* is a master class of "perfect irrationality" with the hood stretched and shaped Hollywood limo style to blend into the streamliners over the rear lid.

Then there is the very distinctive spoiler that extends automatically if you dare to exceed the national speed limit and an inward sloping bottom half that encompasses the diffuser and the socially distanced black sport tailpipes.

It is visually stunning but Porsche say it is more about reducing the overall lift by 50%.

You would also expect to get a lift settling into the body-hugging seats and being confronted with a kaleidoscope of colour and door-to-door screens. Another Spyder surprise. The display and gauges are purely practical and intuitive with no diversions. Without being patronising, it is a refreshing journey going back to basics.

But, the real reason that the 718 is attracting a specific breed of buyers is out of sight. You know the story – the tiny turbo revolution with four-cylinder engines ruling the roost in every department. Performance, emissions, fuel consumption.

This genus of hard-core drivers wanted the hottest Boxster to return to the raw and raucous power of a naturally aspirated flat six.

So Porsche took the three-litre engine of the 911, bored out the cylinders, and increased the piston stroke to create an extra thousand cubic centimetres and stripped off the turbos.

That is the simple explanation. In reality they created a totally re-engineered marvellous monster which, mated with the seven-speed PDK gearbox, delivers an adrenalin and auditory boost with acceleration of 3.9 seconds and a top speed of 300 km/h.

In short, a driver's delight. But, can this finely crafted sports and track car justify the starting price of R1 736 000?

As Porsche say... there are no rational arguments. How about instead, unrestrained emotion and a good headwind?

If you think you might be tempted, my only advice is: do not take the Boxster 718 on a test drive. You might as well speak nicely to your bank manager now.

