

CLASSIC DRIVER

Concept CS Dies Before Birth



Read through the small print of the motor manufacturers' financial announcements and you start to realise some of the consequences of the economic crisis. Consequences, that is, which mean more to car enthusiasts than stark statistics.

Buried deep in the text of a 2200-word BMW press release, for example, is the bald statement that 'the BMW Group will no longer produce a series version of the Concept CS since this vehicle does not meet the internal requirements for rates of return'. What a shame.

Revealed at the 2007 Shanghai motor show, the Concept CS was a potential rival to the Aston Martin Rapide and Porsche Panamera, and anticipation ran high that it would pack a V12 and every type of electronic trickery. (See www.classicdriver.com/uk/magazine/3200.asp?id=13356.) The motor industry will be a less colourful place without it; and BMW is by no means alone in cutting back on its more imaginative projects.

Take the press release from Ferrari about its new European network. On the face of it, a more centralised network is simply good business practice. It will, quote, 'guarantee an efficient distribution of resources between the central and regional offices'. But what exactly does this mean? Later in the same announcement: 'we have decided to withdraw from all existing contracts [re dealer and assistance network] and draw up new agreements'. Yes, EU law governing these contracts expires in 2010 and yes, it paves the way for various 'enhancements'... but would this be happening in quite the same way if Ferraris were selling like hot-cakes? When the dust settles, how many dealers will there be? And where?



Nor is it just the premium market that's feeling the pinch. October's figures from the SMMT (Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders) for the UK new car market are, on the face of it, terrifying. One month's figures can be misleading, for there are always blips, but when total sales are down 23% against the same month last year - and at least 16 marques have dropped by more than 40%, including Alfa Romeo, Daihatsu, MINI, Renault and smart - it's unequivocal. Things are bleak for the volume players as well as the luxury marques.

Still, it's not all doom and gloom. New models are being launched, new technologies more suited to the environment and impending oil shortages are being developed and - even at the top of the tree - there is an

apparently healthy flow of advance orders for the new Ferrari California. For those with the means to buy, there are unprecedented bargains up for grabs, particularly with this week's interest rate cut. But it would take a rare optimist to bet on the BMW Concept CS ever seeing the light of day.

Text: Charis Whitcombe

Photos: BMW

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