Thu, 16 May 2024
Weekly Newsletter

DVN Interior

NEWSLETTER #212

Editorial

"Tech Luxury" Is Key Sales Lever In China

ZEEKR MIX

Consumer attraction in China's EV market is being fought for with touches of "tech luxury" unseen in other markets, but on loud and proud display at the Beijing Auto Show this year.

Chinese EV brands and government-owned legacy automakers are packing previously-premium features into EVs as cheap as $20,000, because Chinese buyers, especially younger ones, prize 'technology luxury'. And so Chinese makers flog their cars the way Apple flogs their iPhones, iPads, and MacBooks: they offer an optimized experience, in accord with what local buyers expect.

This week's in-depth piece looks at this quirk of the Chinese market, and how it drives features, technology, and value into the interiors of cars from makers both Chinese and Western.

Ongoing thanks for your membership in DVN Interior!

Sincerely yours,

Philippe Aumont
DVN-Interior General Editor

In Depth Interior Technology

Beijing Auto Show Interior Report

ZEEKR MIX WORLD PREMIERE (GEELY IMAGE)

The Beijing auto show clearly displayed that the future of the car is electric, intelligent, and connected, and what Chinese buyers expect from a car is changing rapidly and irrevocably.

The importance of the Chinese car market is clearer than ever. According to analysts, this market—already the world's largest—will be as large as the European and US markets combined by 2030. The entire global automotive industry took this motor show very seriously: 117 new models, mostly EVs or PHEVs and 41 concept cars were presented.

BYD, BAC, Great Wall, Xpeng, Geely, Chery, Zeekr, Dongfeng, IM, Lynk & Co, FAW, and BAIC displayed their new products. In BYD's orbit is the Denza Z9 GT. At Chery, it is the luxury brand Exeed which launches the E08 and at Geely, the Zeekr Mix minivan was unveiled. Leapmotor was also there with the new C10 version of the T03, which should arrive in Europe this September. Leapmotor also showed their new C16 SUV. But what's also new this year is the presence of new players such as Huawei and Xiaomi, whose SU7 sold 100,000 in a single day!

ROEWE D5X (SAIC IMAGES)

SAIC Motor's new Roewe D5X DMH plug-in hybrid SUV allows drivers to enter up to 10 different commands into a navigation system, such as a series of different destinations, all at once. The car interior has a Yunsu Intelligent Cockpit. Helping increase intelligence is the Banma AI car machine system which seamlessly links mobile phones and car navigation giving one-click mapping of navigation to the car and charging planning.

XPENG G6 (XPENG IMAGES)

Xpeng expects their upcoming Mona-branded EV (**M**ade **O**f **N**ew **A**I) to be the first in China priced below $21,000 to have high-level self-driving features. They presented AI-powered innovations featured in the X9, including their latest XOS 5.1.0, or Tianji OS, the industry's first OS to comprehensively integrate AI technology into smart cockpit and smart driving, to be rolled out to eligible users on 20 May.

Xpeng is creating intuitive AI in-car OS, which they say will bring a safer and more comfortable driving experience whether in self- or human-driven operation. They have upgraded their cars' SR (surround reality) perception capabilities; they say it now can accurately identify over 50 objects in surrounding areas.

Xpeng also plans to roll out AI Valet Driver, after significant enhancement in visual perception and control capabilities driven by AI technology. With powerful self-learning capabilities, the system can be activated regardless of the availability of XNGP, and precisely memorizes driving routes during manual operation, offering customized driving experiences with up to ten 100-km routes with excellent driving support nationwide.

NAMMI DONGFENG IMAGES

Dongfeng showed their Nammi EV with a 300-km (186-mile) range, which sells for just $9,600. Owners can start the car and open the doors remotely with a smartphone.

The Nammi 01 offers a black-and-white or black-and-grey interior, with 32-color ambient lighting. There's a 5″ LCD instrument panel, a two-spoke multifunction steering wheel, and a 12.8″ floating central control screen. Its front seats also offer a one-click, lie-flat mode.

The Nammi also offers L^2 ADAS, mobile remote-control capability, OTA updates, mobile phone wireless charging, and smart voice control.

HUAWEI AITO (HUAWEI IMAGES)

Huawei, in partnership with Seres, makes this Aito-branded EV. It has a simple cockpit with an instrument panel and a floating central control screen. The instrument screen is 10.25", and the central control screen is 15.6". The operating system is almost certainly Huawei Harmony OS 3.0. The center console has two cupholders and dual wireless charging pads. The sound system is an in-house Huawei one. Rear passengers have access to tablets that hang on the back of the front row seats. The Huawei MagLink interface allows multiple device linkage and content sharing inside the car. For example, a parent sitting in the front row can control the content of the tablet that the child watches on the other tablet.

NIO ET7 (NIO IMAGES)

Nio, under the theme "Lead the Change", presented eight 2024 models including an official launch of their ET7 electric executive sedan. Over 200 Nio 'user volunteers' were at the booth to introduce more people, collectively communicating the vision of 'Blue Sky Coming'.

The ET7 comes with a raft of computing power, including an all-around upgrade in cabin intelligence and smart driving capabilities.

BYD FANGCHENGBAO 5 (BYD IMAGE)

BYD unveiled new EV and PHEV versions of their Dynasty and Ocean series mass-market cars. New vehicles from the maker's Yangwang luxury brand were on display, and BYD also revealed a new production model and two concept PHEVs for their off-road vehicle and sports car brands.

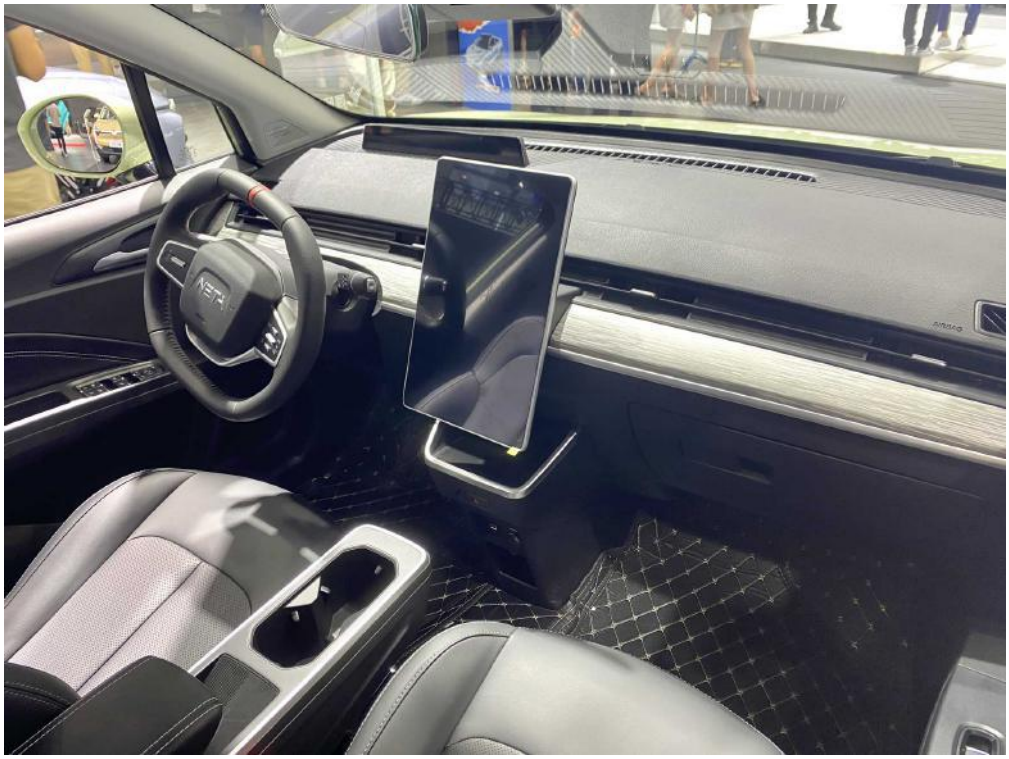
GEELY IMAGE

Geely showed new EV models slotting under their affordable Geely brand and new Lynk & Co-branded premium PHEVs.

They also unveiled the Starship, their new top-line high-tech SUV based on the maker's GEA architecture. It draws on the Yinhe family design language, with an 'Expanding Cosmos of Light' design bristling with features such as the new-generation Leishen electric hybrid, 11-in-1 smart electric drive, panoramic surround audio AI system, and AI smart seats.

NETA V (NETA IMAGE)

He Xiaopeng of **Xpeng** presented the X9, a 7-seater said to be able to swallow five bicycles in its cargo area, saying its AI "learns the habits of drivers and can then imitate their driving".



NETA V (NETA IMAGE)

The **Neta Aya** (Chinese: 哪吒 Aya; pinyin: Nézhā Aya), previously named the Neta V, is an electric subcompact crossover SUV produced by Hozon Auto under the all-electric Chinese Neta (Nezha) brand, and built by the Zhejiang Hezhong New Energy Automobile Company. The Neta L will offer an REEV version with a combined range of 1,070 km. The model's most distinctive feature is its integration with Neta's all new AI flagship technology, Neta GPT, which will offer global users with a Neta assistant to enhance intelligent cockpit experience.

The presentation of **Xiaomi**'s SU7 was kind of the highlight of the auto show. A car from a manufacturer with an existing ecosystem of devices such as smartphones, laptops and smart TVs fulfills young consumers' desire for social networking and technological sophistication. At the same time, automated driving functions, a smart cockpit and entertainment in the 'third space' of their daily lives (other than home and work) are becoming more important in China for the young generation.

Honda unveiled their E:NS2 battery-electric hatchback.

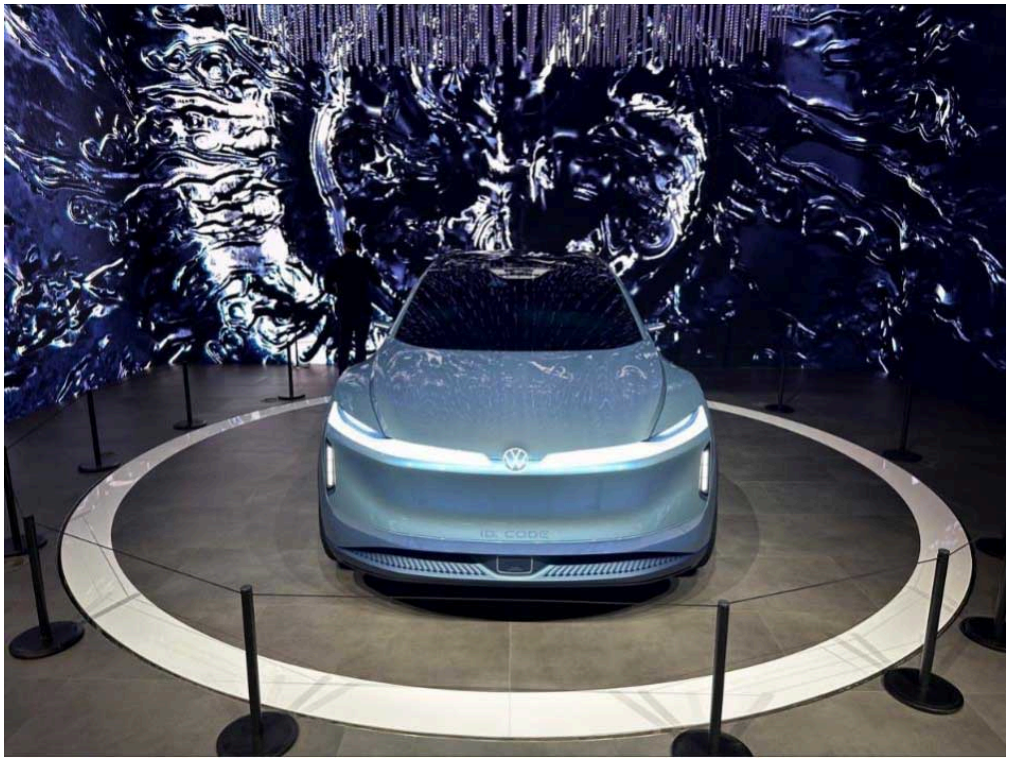
E:NP2 (HONDA IMAGE)

The e:NP2 and e:NS2 have an advanced and highly functional HMI including a large HUD and interior light patterns which change according to vehicle functions. Interior lighting includes fluctuating patterns from LED lights on the instrument panel and door panels that change in conjunction with the AI-powered assistance and other functions. Both models will enter the Chinese market by the end of 2024; the e:NP2 is on sale from GAC Honda, the vehicle production and sales joint venture in China. The e:NS2 will be sold by Dongfeng Honda, the second production and sales joint venture, starting next month.

There's a 12.8" display audio and Connect 4.0, the latest connectivity technology designed exclusively for Honda EVs in China. The new models have an intelligent heating system which minimizes power consumption through various measures such as a cooperative control of the air conditioning unit and other onboard heating features.

They are also the first Honda China models to have an aroma system which enables the occupants to use the display audio or a smartphone app to select their favorite fragrance and diffuse it throughout the vehicle.

Honda also previewed the new Ye subbrand they will use for new electric models, starting with the Ye P7 large electric SUV to go on sale this year; they also showed their Ye GT concept.



VW ID.CODE (VW IMAGE)

BMW, Mercedes, Audi, and **VW** are seeing their market share increase, thanks to their ongoing appeal to a segment of the Chinese population. In 2023, Audi sold 670,000 cars in China—up from 510,000 in 2015. BMW recorded a volume of 745,000 vehicles last year compared to 287,000 eight years earlier. And Mercedes sales totalled 690,000 units compared to 287,000 in 2015. These three brands now have a market share of 7.3 per cent, compared to 4.7 per cent in 2017.

1MERCEDES EQG INTERIOR – MERCEDES IMAGE

Mercedes offers the EQG, the electric CLA, and the EQS. CEO Ola Kaellenius told Reuters his Chinese digital tech team is dedicated to catering to the tastes of younger and more tech-oriented consumers in China. "In the new E-Class, you can sing karaoke. Maybe you don't have that feature in Germany. Maybe you should. But here customers love it," he said.

On the EQG, the exterior cameras will display on the central screen in low-visibility situations, and there's an 'off-road cockpit' to show data like steering angles, tire pressures, a compass, and a virtual view beneath the front of the car when approaching steep off-road obstacles, or high borders and bollards in an urban setting.

Smart

SMART #5 CONCEPT (SMART IMAGES)

Smart's #5 Concept is a new interpretation of this segment, abandoning the roundish shapes of past Smart models.

"You will definitely recognize the style from the Mercedes-Benz design team that have designed all the Smarts so far," CEO Dirk Adelmanm said. "It's one family when you look at it."

The interior has two large, high-definition embedded touchscreens, one centrally located and the other aimed at the passenger. Smart said they have designed a new HMI, perhaps in response to some #1 and #3 buyers' unfavorable reaction to the usability of the screen menus on those models. The car uses what Smart calls a 'zero-gravity' front passenger seat that claims to offer a combination of comfort and safety, integrating features such as heating, ventilation, massage functions, and a legrest. Smart also touted an AI-driven voice control powered by software from Cerence. The system is said to allow occupants to participate in 'entertaining conversations' with the virtual in-car assistant.

The **VW ID.Unyx** is based on an Xpeng platform. The VW ID.Code was already presented in DVN Interior. VW is still China's leading foreign brand, and now plans to deliver the "Chinese wow effects" consumers there expect, China chief Ralf Brandstaetter told reporters during the show.

AUDI IMAGES

Audi presented the elongated Q6 e-tron, and announced increased production capacities in Changchun.

Behind the steering wheel sits a large dual screen 'digital stage' display that provides driving data and acts as an infotainment hub. The screens sit behind one panel of glass and feature OLED technology.

The 'virtual cockpit' in front of the driver measures 11.9" while the infotainment touchscreen measures 14.5". Next to the curved display is a 10.9" display for the front passenger. This screen features a polarizer film allowing passengers to watch movies without distracting the driver.

There's an optional AR-HUD for the driver. Virtual images are tilted forwards to appear more natural, and the 88-inch (diagonally) display can cast images that appear like they're 200 meters down the road. The images can even interact with the surrounding environment. The virtual display also shows critical information such as traffic signs and navigation information.

GM ELECTRA CONCEPT (GM IMAGES)

GM's Electra concept has 7 screens, a light-sensitive panoramic sunroof, and AI-powered digital interaction in the cockpit. SAIC-GM launched sales of the Cadillac Optiq, another Ultium-based crossover, at the show. It has butterfly doors, and a cabin inspired by a spaceship: minimalist design with no traditional instrument panel. A huge, floating curved screen is the central feature, along with a retractable steering column and suspended seats that create a zero-gravity visual effect. This futuristic atmosphere offers plenty of space for four people.

BMW**'s MINI** brand touted creative use of space for their Aceman small electric crossover, which will be built exclusively in China to start out. It features a minimalistic design, giving the cars a contemporary look that "exudes effortless assurance", the company said.

Design simplicity (referred to as "Charismatic Simplicity") is visible in the interior, where the Aceman follows the original vision of Alec Issigonis, who designed the original old 1959 Mini. With its easy-to-handle steering wheel, a central OLED display and the remodeled toggle bar, the Aceman cockpit echoes three key design elements of the original Mini.

MINI IMAGE

The Aceman features Mini's first full voice assistant, which can be activated by saying, "Hey Mini," or by using the push-to-talk button on the steering wheel. The Intelligent Personal Assistant learns continuously through dialogue, and can take on day-to-day tasks on repeated routes. Based on geo-based data, for example, the vehicle can identify the entrance to a multi-story parking garage and automatically open the window. This means that individual routines can be handled more conveniently.

TOYOTA IMAGES

Toyota announced they will partner with Chinese gaming and social media giant Tencent. The two companies say they want to better integrate artificial intelligence and big data into cars.

Toyota developed the bZ3C in partnership with BYD Toyota EV Technology, FAW, and Toyota's Intelligent ElectroMobility R&D Center team. The bZ3X, on the other hand is based on a collaboration between Toyota, the GAC Group, GAC Toyota, and IEM.

Antolin, alongside their local partner CAIP—a leading Chinese vehicle component supplier—exhibited their latest innovations aimed at transforming automotive interiors with sustainability in mind. Such as:

- **Innovative sustainable headliner** crafted from recycled waste and biobased materials

ANTOLIN IMAGE

- **Next-generation natural fiber products** which nearly halve weight and reduce CO_2 emissions
- Components featuring **recycled marine plastic fabric**: Antolin developed a polyester fabric using Seaqual yarn, which is made of recycled marine plastics.
- **Persiskin Auto**, a vegetable skin interior offering a harmonious blend of sustainability and style. It is adapted to the demanding requirements of the automotive sector in terms of technical performance, perceived quality and real parameters of minimum demonstrable environmental impact throughout the life cycle.
- **Customizable and sustainable decorative components** to let designers bring their visions to life while minimizing environmental impact.

TOYOTA BOSHOKU IMAGE

Toyota Boshoku presented work on self-driving cars in collaboration with Chinese companies, as well as proposals for future automotive interior spaces and carbon-neutral products in their 'Lounze' Space Concept mockup, including:

- Reclining, swivelling seats on long slide rails to create a variety of seating arrangements. The seats' indirect lighting and the starlight headliner create a space providing the sense of relaxing in your own living room.
- Motion Sickness Mitigation System; a device installed in the headrest blows a refreshing breeze to cool the neck area, helping relieve symptoms of motion sickness.
- Seat vibration to notify passengers of departure and arrival.
- UVC-LED disinfection system; after passengers exit the vehicle, the interior is disinfected with deep ultraviolet LED light.
- Privacy Audio Headrests

Interior News

Novares, TGO Partner for Intelligent and Intuitive HMI

INTERIOR NEWS

TG0 and Novares celebrate 4 years of partnership by reinvigorating their joint work on new innovative smart systems development, where TG0 technology has been integrated into Novares' products.

Based in France, Novares is a global designer and manufacturer of complex plastic components and systems for the automotive industry.

TG0 is a London-based hardware-tech company, developing HMIs with innovative design interactions using patented sensing technology.

Teams from the two companies strengthened their collaboration around the Beijing Auto Show to present their co-working alliance on electronic-based plastic commands to customers and partners, combining designs, technology, and new endless possibilities.

Novares Group brings expertise in the production of advanced solutions with intelligent and intuitive interfaces integrating TG0's innovative solutions for new EVs. Using the same sustainable approach, both companies serve the motto "build more with less" which means fewer materials, lower energy consumption, and easy recycling for a more powerful product and as much as 33-per-cent CO_2 reduction.

The innovative technology combines ergonomics and design freedom into one monolithic control unit that offers intuitive interactions to user through sliding, tilting, push/pulling or swiping gestures. Targeted products include center and overhead consoles, seat controllers, IPs, door handle controllers, and more. The collaborative expertise of both companies allows a broad user interface portfolio to meet customers' demands and users' expectations.

TG0 first came to the attention of Novares during the Nova Car accelerator. Novares started co-working with a few partners in 2018 through Novares Venture Capital, then quickly enlarged their collaboration to startups and innovative compagnies.

Novares CEO Pierre Boulet said, "Partnering with TG0 is really fulling our move towards 'Beyond Plastics' trend. It will provide a new, unique, and attractive experience to all generations of car drivers. This is the result of a long lasting and strong working relation between TG0 and Novares".

And TG0 CEO Ming Kong said, "Our continued partnership with Novares is a testament to our shared commitment to innovation, safety, and excellence in the automotive industry. Together, we're redefining user interactions and style through intuitive design and advanced HMI technology. This elevated collaboration signifies our dedication to providing cutting-edge solutions that enhance the driving experience and contribute to the future of mobility".

Mazda's CX-80 Is New Top-Line Model

INTERIOR NEWS

MAZDA IMAGES

The Mazda CX-80 SUV is based on the "Skyactiv Multi-Solution Scalable Architecture" and is the new top model in Europe.

Three different seating configurations with six or seven seats are available. The seven-seater has a sliding, 40:60 split bench seat in the second row, and the six-seater has a 'Captain Seat' configuration with two individual seats.

The 'Driver Personalization System' uses a camera to automatically adjust the seat position, steering wheel, mirrors, head-up display, sound and climate settings to the body type or saved configuration. The cockpit has a digital design, with a 12.3" touchscreen for infotainment on the center console. Smartphones can be connected wirelessly to Apple Carplay or Android Auto, and also Alexa voice control is on board. The 'Trailer Hitch View' function makes it easier to hitch up a trailer by displaying it on the screen. A panoramic glass roof is available as an option.

The new assistance systems include support for inattentive drivers and the front collision protection (SBS) of the Emergency Brake Assist. This is designed to mitigate collisions with oncoming vehicles. Another new features are the extended traffic jam assistance function (CTS) and an evasion assistant, which also helps to avoid collisions with oncoming vehicles. A new rear seat occupancy warning alerts the driver to objects or passengers that may still be in the rear seats when the driver gets out.

Driver Monitoring Systems: Trends and Developments

INTERIOR NEWS

BOSCH IMAGE

Robust driver monitoring is coming under ever sharper scrutiny as more capable assistance features reach the market – and the most advanced systems could offer advantages beyond occupant safety, writes Alex Grant, in the January 2024 issue of ADAS & Autonomous Vehicle International. But drivers still must be attentive, and monitoring this effectively is crucial. Therefore, a DMS will be mandatory in type approvals in Europe from July 2024 and in all new registrations two years later.

Today's systems fall into two categories, either monitoring attention indirectly (typically based on steering inputs) or directly with a camera tracking eye gaze and/or head posture; testing by AAA suggests the latter is much more effective.

The IIHS (U.S. Insurance Institute of Highway Safety) introduced new DMS ratings last year, awarding systems with gaze and head posture monitoring and multiple alerts. Only a few companies are using driver-monitoring cameras to detect whether the driver is looking at the road ahead. Many systems use only hands-on-wheel detection. Among camera monitors, some are able to detect where the eyes are looking while others can detect only which direction the face is pointing.

Camera-based systems are developing quickly. Near-infrared technology can track gaze through sunglasses, and higher-resolution cameras could monitor the entire cabin. This would provide opportunities for additional safety features, such as enabling vehicles to pre-tension seatbelts and prime airbags more accurately before a collision, as well as offering new features for customers. The latest cameras with higher resolution are a combination of infrared and color. You can start doing things like selfie cam or video telephony and start using that camera for more than just regulatory stuff to bring value to the end consumer.

Brian Brackenbury, director of product line development at Gentex, says: "We're also really excited about 3D depth perception. Once you've already got our camera pointed in the cabin, you can add structured light, and the camera is actually looking at those invisible, near-infrared dots in the field. We can model the occupants in the vehicle in the 3D world as a means to better enhance secure safety systems. This means we can more accurately identify if they truly are holding onto the steering wheel, or maybe they're floating over it, whereas 2D can still get a little confused."

For suppliers, the next stages include increased need to understand and interpret human physiology – such as intoxication, drowsiness and ill health. Smart Eye CEO Martin Krantz says technology is supporting scrutiny of human behaviors for qualitative studies, and monitoring responses to entertainment and advertising. By tracking facial expressions, gaze direction, and gestures of each person in a car, you gain another layer of insight into what they are doing and feeling: "This enables much more advanced user interfaces than what we have today".

Ecarx, FAW Collaborate on Intelligent Cockpits

INTERIOR NEWS

ECARX IMAGE

Mobility technology provider Ecarx has partnered with the FAW Group, a Chinese automaker, to develop intelligent cockpits for FAW's Hongqi luxury car brand.

Ecarx and FAW will combine their R&D capabilities and technological expertise to build an end-to-end value chain for the development of intelligent cockpits with the goal of setting new industry benchmarks.

As part of the collaboration, both companies will co-develop and co-design cockpit domain controllers and terminal products within the brand's ecosystem and provide maintenance for connected-car systems.

Ziyu Shen is cofounder, chair, and CEO of Ecarx, and says, "With the signing of this cooperation agreement, Ecarx and FAW Group are about to embark on a journey that will bring rapid change, technical advancement and innovation to the sector. Working together on developing intelligent cockpits for FAW's flagship brand Hongqi is a vote of confidence in Ecarx and is a reflection of the quality of our products and our ability to drive innovation."

Ecarx is a global automotive technology provider working with automakers, with focus on software-defined vehicles. While makers develop new vehicle platforms from the ground up, Ecarx develops complete solutions to enhance the user experience while reducing complexity and cost.

So far, Ecarx products have been integrated into more than 5.6 million cars worldwide.

Aston Martin Updates DBX707 Interior

INTERIOR NEWS

ASTON MARTIN IMAGES

Aston Martin has launched their newest top-line SUV, the DBX707, with enhancements to its interior, infotainment system and exterior design.

It has Aston Martin's in-house-developed infotainment system, which features wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, multiple USB-C connections, and full online connectivity. The system has a large 12.3" driver's instrument cluster and a 10.25" central infotainment display, providing intuitive control and access to a range of connected car features.

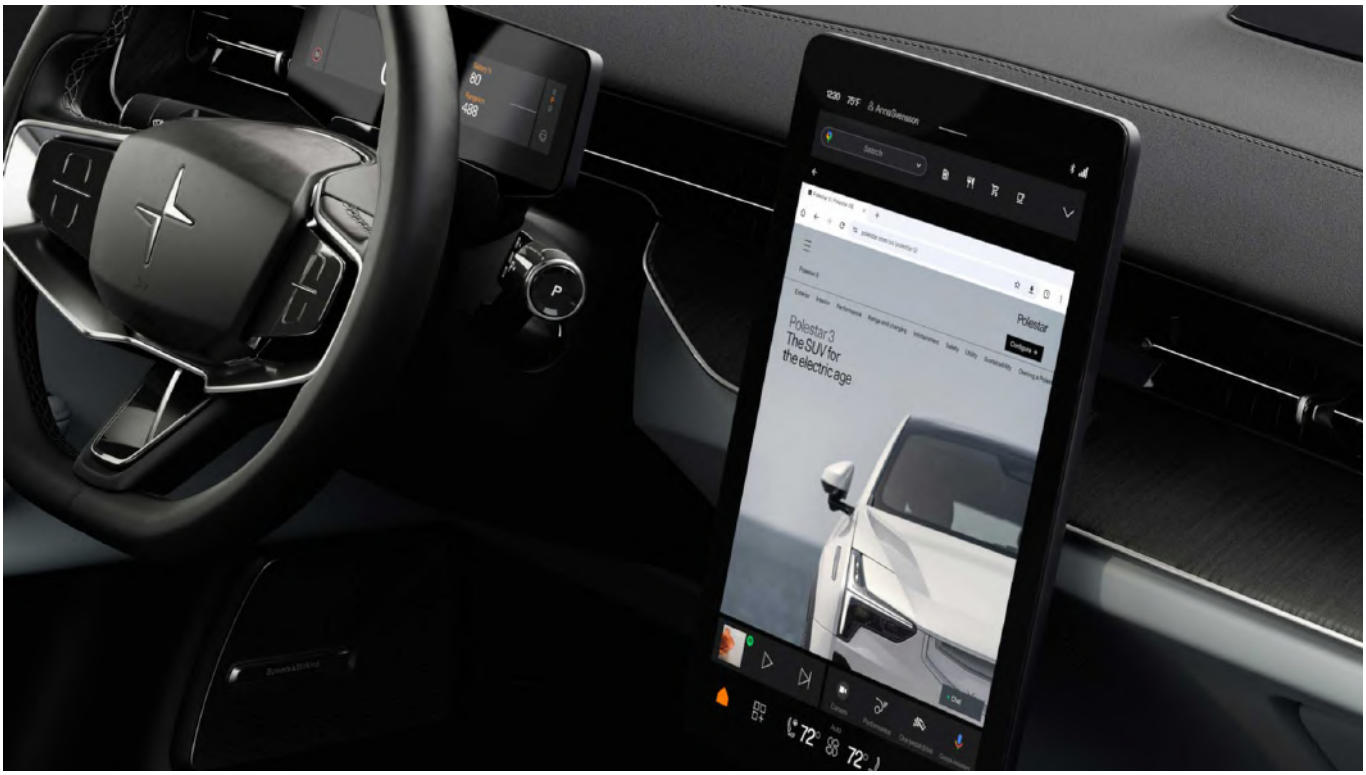
The DBX707 showcases a new interior design characterized by clean lines, contemporary materials, and enhanced craftsmanship. The cabin focuses on creating a sense of space and cohesion. Various elements, including the steering wheel, door handles, and air outlets, have been redesigned for improved functionality and aesthetic appeal. New front door veneer panels are available in a range of materials including gloss smoked oak, gloss titanium mesh and updated ziricote wood, piano black, and carbon fiber.

Three interior trim specifications provide personalized options: Inspire Comfort features matrix embroidery and quilting; Inspire Sport has vector embroidery; and Accelerate with Alcantara offers "an extra element of sportiness".

Additionally, the DBX707 now comes standard with an Aston Martin Premium Audio 800-watt 14-speaker audio system, designed for a surround sound experience for an immersive driving environment. Production of the new DBX707 is slated to start in Q2 of this year.

Battle for Cockpits In China

INTERIOR NEWS



POLESTAR IMAGE

Chinese suppliers Desay and Huayang were virtually unknown just a few years ago. Now they are preparing to conquer their home market for "smart cockpits". With their central control units, LCD screens and head-up displays (HUD), they are competing with system suppliers such as Bosch and Continental.

The rapid digitalization of electric cars in all areas and Chinese drivers' preference for large, modern screens and lots of high-tech behind the wheel have caused the market to explode.

A particularly striking example of this is Desay SV, which has been going head-to-head with Continental for first place in LCD instrument panels in the People's Republic since the beginning of this year. Just five years ago, Desay mainly built traditional car parts and audio systems for cars with combustion engines. But when the "smart cockpit" suddenly became popular in China in 2018 and electric cars such as the ES8 from Nio appeared in the spotlight, Desay's managers boldly embraced the new trend of integrating various high-tech components in the cockpit.

Chip manufacturers Mobileye, Nvidia and Qualcomm are still ahead with their products when it comes to the rapidly growing demand for more computing power to integrate various components such as lidar, ADAS cameras, electronic rear-view mirrors and HUD.

However, Chinese suppliers are currently catching up fast when it comes to all other hardware and software in the interior. "The intelligence of automobiles has changed the traditional power structure. The technical barriers of the original tier-1 suppliers no longer exist and are being replaced by the integration effect of technology stacks," writes the Chinese trade portal 36K about an industry in upheaval.

Like Desay, Huayang spent large sums on research and development. Huayang occupies the new market for electronic systems in the interior. The supplier has now taken on a notable role in domain controllers, HUD and the new AR-HUD.

In summary, it can be said that a new, particularly intense phase has begun in the battle for the cockpit in China.

The Design Lounge

Bentley Mulliner Batur Cabrio's Unique Interior

THE DESIGN LOUNGE

COFFEE CORNER
DVN
Interior

BENTLEY IMAGES

It's a huge effort designing a new Bentley. Even more so when only 16 examples are to be produced.

Many people and teams are involved in supporting the design process, all bringing their experience and knowledge together to deliver this special car.

Working as an interior designer, working on any Bentley convertible is always a dream job - but the team expressed their excitement of working on the convertible version of the Mulliner Batur having the design scope and freedom to deliver an interior that will be clearly on display when the roof is lowered under the integrated tonneau.
Close collaboration between the exterior and interior design teams was crucial of course - and in this instance even more so.

Their goal was to deliver a car that merged the interior and exterior boundaries together with a design that delivered visual excitement with a true two seat experience.

The panels behind the seats are designed in such a way to give a true speedster style when the convertible roof is stowed, yet can remain in place even when the roof is raised.
With virtually unlimited colors and materials each of the 16 cars will be a truly unique statement.

Interior Jewelry!

News Mobility

Zeekr Mix: Future Robotaxi?

NEWS MOBILITY

The Zeekr Mix was presented to the public for the first time at the Beijing Auto Show just recently. It is in the same segment as VW's ID.Buzz, and its two-tone color, very little front overhang, wheelbase of three meters, and total length of 4.69 meters make it seem inspired by the German-brand electric minivan. Even the weight is comparable; it will be 2,639 or 2,739 kg, depending on the equipment. It has also the same Valeo technology, with an LED full-width front grilleboard illuminable in 16 levels of gray.

Inside, the Mix has two rows of three seats, including the front. A five-seater version is also available. To get on board, all the side doors will slide, including the front right passenger door. The turning radius is less than 10 meters—impressive for a vehicle of this segment.

Zeekr announced the Mix as a first step towards robotaxi, since the SEA-M platform will be used for the brand's robotaxi, the Zeekr M Vision, in partnership with Waymo. The SEA-M architecture, a derivative of the original Sustainable Experience Architecture (SEA), is a high-tech mobility solution from Zeekr. It supports a wide range of mobility products from passenger vehicles like robotaxis and MPVs to commercial vehicles used for logistics.

An intelligent 'living room on wheels' can be created with the architecture's key features, including spacious interior, variable seat placement choices, the hidden B-pillar, and advanced electrical/electronic (E/E) backbone. With the flat floors, a high wheelbase-to-length ratio, and a capsule-style exterior, in-cabin space is maximized on every model based on the SEA-M architecture. So is in-cabin experience. The SEA-M's advanced E/E backbone allows infotainment screens to be set up both for the driver and passengers, easing the boredom of travelling on road.

General News

Lear Agrees to Buy WIP Industrial Automation

GENERAL NEWS

WIP IMAGE

Lear has entered a definitive agreement to acquire WIP Industrial Automation, a privately held systems integrator based in Spain that specializes in advanced automation solutions for industrial applications. The purchase is intended to enhance Lear's automation and AI capabilities.

WIP—a longtime Lear supplier with 25 years' automation experience—develops and integrates technologies to create customized automation solutions for manufacturing applications. WIP brings strong robotics and AI-based computer vision capabilities to Lear, which are important for safety, quality, and efficiency in a modern manufacturing environment.

This acquisition will be the latest of Lear's strategic investments designed to broaden their automation and digital capabilities and build on the company's assimilation of ASI Automation, Thagora Technology, and InTouch Automation. The collective expertise of WIP, ASI, Thagora, and InTouch equip Lear with a portfolio of automation solutions and technical knowledge that span all areas of the manufacturing process and will accelerate innovation in the development of next-generation automation technologies.

"WIP brings valuable manufacturing engineering capabilities that are essential to advancing innovative automation solutions across our global operations," said Ray Scott, Lear President and CEO. "This acquisition will support Lear's long-term strategy to strengthen our market leadership through operational excellence. We are thrilled to welcome the WIP team to the Lear family."

"This transaction gives WIP a unique opportunity to become part of a world-class automotive company, marrying WIP's expertise in robotics and AI technologies with Lear's industry-leading knowledge in product design, engineering, and manufacturing processes," said Ángel Rodríguez Fernández, WIP CEO and co-owner. "Having valued Lear as a customer for many years, we are excited to join the Lear family and look forward to continuing to develop new innovations that leverage our combined capabilities."

Covestro and Partners Collaborate on Car-to-Car Recycling

GENERAL NEWS

COVESTRO IMAGE

Materials manufacturer Covestro is collaborating with partners from across the automotive value chain on the concept of car-to-car closed-loop plastics recycling. The initiative is a response to the challenges of plastic waste management within the auto industry.

Amid growing global environmental awareness and stricter regulatory demands, the automotive industry is turning its attention to plastic recycling as an important component of its sustainable development efforts.

In a joint pilot program initiated by German federal enterprise GIZ ("Society for International Cooperation"), Covestro and their collaborators aim to establish closed-loop pathways for high-value plastics sourced from end-of-life vehicles. The objective is to create an efficient and sustainable automotive plastic recycling system.

As part of this initiative with key partners like Nio and Volkswagen, Chinese recycling firm Gem, and third-party certification bodies like TÜV Rheinland, experts will explore techniques to recycle and process waste polycarbonate components, such as end-of-life car headlights, into post-consumer recycled polycarbonates. These recycled materials will then be reintegrated into various interior and exterior vehicle applications, offering a sustainable alternative that conserves resources and reduces carbon emissions.

With regulations becoming increasingly stringent, highlighted by the European Commission's proposal in 2023 mandating the use of recycled plastics in new vehicles, initiatives like Covestro's closed-loop plastics recycling seek to provide long-term solutions for the industry's sustainability challenges.