

AUTO EXPRESS

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Ford's defence in title fight

THE potential legal action by German magazine Focus (Newsweek, Issue 493) against Ford's use of the name for its Escort replacement (pictured) has been discussed at great length among fellow members of MINI (Mini Internet International discussion group). We've concluded this breaks the mould for Ford, since none of our 700 members recalls legal action from the publishers of 'adult' journals Fiesta and Escort when these models were launched!
John C Bullas, co-founder of MINI



Warped vision

FOLLOWING your Vision Zero feature about the UK learning road safety lessons from Sweden (Inside Story, Issue 492), I'd like to point out a few facts. Sweden is three times the size of the UK, it has a population of nine million and records on average 800 road deaths a year. Britain has a population of around 65 million, and lists 3,650 road deaths per year (10 per day). These figures equate to one person in every 11,250 killed per annum in Sweden, yet 'only' one in every 17,808 killed per annum in the UK. I couldn't agree more about the inadequacy of the UK transport system - but Sweden's road safety is as bad as ours!
Simon Gardner, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Birthday blues

LIKE the Rev Colin Corke's Austin Allegro (Newsweek, Issue 493), my Maxi won't qualify for its old-age pension, as Chancellor Gordon Brown has changed the rules. I'd hoped the free car tax for classic models was here to stay. It's very unfair.
Gavin Boyd Thomson, Uphire, Essex

Insurance scam

RECENTLY, my estate car was the victim of hit-and-run damage. The approved repairer said it would need the car for two to three weeks to replace the rear door. I queried this, and was assured this length of time was necessary. I live in a rural area, where a car is necessary, and the repairer is 40 miles away. A courtesy car, which it promised to supply free of charge, is essential. Then I was told I'd have to pay a £34.13 premium for transferring this courtesy vehicle on to my insurance policy. I refused, especially as the courtesy car was rated in an insurance group which was several lower than my

own car. Also, as I was not renting or hiring the vehicle (it was a free loan), why was I asked to sign a service rental/hire agreement? I then went to a franchised dealer for my vehicle, which has provided an estimate for the work: eight hours' labour plus parts at list price, with a courtesy car provided free of charge. Insurance companies must investigate the practices of their 'approved repairers scheme' and pass on any savings which can obviously be made in smaller claims payouts in the form of reduced premiums to customers.
J Dowse, Sutton-on-Sea, Lincolnshire

Fuelish mistake

MY 10-year-old Nissan will run on either unleaded or leaded petrol, so I use the pump available nearest the filler cap. One morning I inadvertently filled my car with diesel. The dual pump had the wording 'the lowest petrol prices in town' emblazoned on top, but the only indication that half the pump dispensed diesel was a small sign some 1in by 2in to the side at the top of the pump. The manager said I ought to have known the pump was dispensing diesel, as the connecting lead was coloured black. I was of the opinion blue denoted diesel and I feel it is time one colour was used nationwide to indicate diesel, especially as supermarkets dispense up to three fuels per pump.
Jackie Johnson, Dewsbury, West Yorks



Ford's faults

HAVING read Auto Express regularly for several months, I notice you praise Ford for its innovation and bold designs. Both the Puma and Focus are visually striking and detract from the bland designs produced by most other car manufacturers. I was so impressed with Ford I decided to buy an Escort 1.8 Si as an 'opt-out' company vehicle. However, it appears I have made a huge mistake; my car has a defective engine management calibration module that makes the car shudder and accelerate erratically. Letters and calls to the dealer, Ford customer assistance and Ford Credit proved fruitless - I still have a defective car which I distrust so much, I've been driving a courtesy car for more than three months. Ford simply ignores me. Why does the manufacturer spoil such a good product with this sloppy, frustrating aftersales? Yes, the Puma is a stunning piece of design and the Focus is innovative, but Ford customer care is nothing short of prehistoric!
Kirby Ellis, Leeds

Cost of choice

IT seems the prices of new cars go up as more models and specifications become available. You list 175 Fords, 165 Vauxhalls and 100 Rovers in your New Car Prices published each week. Surely it's time the motor industry rationalised and reverted back to producing only basic or deluxe variants in petrol or diesel models, with manual or automatic gearboxes, to reduce prices. On another point, I'd also like to know what has been achieved for the motor trade by the UK going into the Common Market. Cars which have been transported across the Channel can be bought for less on the Continent.
Gordon Hudson, Derby

Mini's time up

READING your comparison between the Mini Cooper and Citroen Saxo VTR (Issue 492) was interesting. I owned a Mini Cooper and loved it - but that was 30 years ago. I now own a Saxo VTR. Should anyone out there own a VTR and want to swap it for the Mini, I'd be most surprised. You can count me out. By the way, my years of backache have disappeared since I've been driving the Citroen, so its seats can't be that bad.
James Stak, Ipswich

Reader doubts anyone would want to swap modern Citroen Saxo for ageing Mini Cooper