

Chinese Impressions of the Auto Show

My 17 year old son and I attended the auto show last month. There was a lot to see. All the major manufacturers had beautiful displays of not only their latest products all shiny and bright, but their vision of how our automotive future may evolve.

All of that was most impressive. But what I found to be the most interesting was found tucked in the basement away from the glitter and glamour of the main floor. There was a simple, and somewhat lonely display by the very first Chinese automaker to make an appearance at the most impressive and influential auto show in North America. Yep, in a tiny display, with just a few vehicles, manned by one young staffer, was the toe hold of what I believe will become a major march of Chinese automobile manufactures into our lives. Changfeng Motor had arrived.

A lot will be written by others about the impact of this move and I will not claim to know anything about the significance of this event but I did find a few interesting (and amusing) things to see at their display. My son and I watched an interesting video on the great tradition of Changfeng dating back to at least 1996, if I remember correctly. Ten whole years! As we watched I was amused by the images shown of this worker's paradise, including images of our old buddy Mao Tse-tung! Although I imagine once they become savvy enough to hire marketing professionals, they will put some distance between them and the late Chairman. I doubt if his image will be displayed so freely once they move upstairs with the big boys. Rather I suspect on an updated video they will tie in with McDonald's or Home Depot and make it somehow patriotic to drive a Changfeng.

What really caught my eye was when I picked brochures on their product line. I suspect they will learn fast or at least copy well, but words like "cutting edge" and "forward thinking" do not come to mind when looking at the photos or seeing the product before me. The brochures do however provide a bunch of laughs when the translation between Chinese and English doesn't quite flow smoothly. When describing the new Liebao Feiteng CFA6400 (rolls right off the tongue, eh?) They say, "*It carries forward the pure notable blood relationship.*" Huh? And in describing the Liebao CS6, they note that it is, "*Powerful & Endure Dynamic Showing Champion Fascination.*", in addition to "*inheriting the classic cross-country science & technology and the experience of former Liebao Motors, upon which Changfeng Group has the fully independent intellectual property.*" I'm thinking they might have won it in a knife fight. It also, "*attaches importance to the feeling of movement and coziness apart from the emphasis on driving*

pleasure.” I may be wrong but I always thought you wanted these two things to go together.

The most insulting to the art of the automotive industry was the CS7. At least the ad was amusing. I realize that communist China wanted to strip away individuality but listen to this from the brochure, “...*the outward appearance of conquering the innermost being of the vehicles owner.*” Geez, now they even have their cars trying to suck the individuality out of people. I’m tellin’ ya we had better watch ourselves. Of course the Big Three) spent most of the ‘80’s sucking the individuality out of us with the lame products they offered. Oh well, I guess there really in nothing new under the sun. And this next line had me laughing out loud. I know they meant “fuel” consumption, but what they printed was, “*The oil consumption is 7.3L/100km during the drive at average speed of 60Km/h.*” I’m not sure, but I don’t think the American public is going to put up with a car that uses almost two gallons of oil every 60 miles. Then again, we all bought British cars didn’t we?

The line that brought me to my knees and attracted the attention of security with my hysterical laughing, was from the brochure of the Liebao Black Giant CFA2030 Off Road Vehicle. When describing the engine it said, “*It can ignite under low temperatures and anoxia.*” Ignite? Anoxia? Are they trying to kill us? If I remember, anoxia is related to hypoxia which is where there is a deficiency of oxygen reaching the brain.

I’m no conspiracy nut but I would be very concerned about these Chinese cars if I were us. Of course there may be a bright side to all of this. In the same brochure it says, “*The body is broadened, thus the body becomes more well-stacked and smooth. Strong power drives the mighty body. You will feel full momentum and great dignity.*” Finally, they get it. Something with a nice strong dignified body that is smooth and well stacked. Hey, these guys may be OK after all.

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