Commentary

**Turin auto show, rich with Chinese brands, gives glimpse of Europe's future**


Dongfeng models on display at the Turin auto show in the historic city center. (LUCA CIFERRI/AUTOMOTIVE NEWS EUROPE)

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TURIN — Could the open-air Turin auto show be seen as a preview of what happens next on the European market?

In the squares that marked the royal district of the former capital of Italy, there were 40 brands on display from Sept. 26-28, equally split between Chinese and Chinese-owned, and a rest of the world that included Europe, Japan, South Korea and the U.S.

Sales-wise, in five of the last six months, the combined market share of Chinese brands has stabilized at slightly more than 5 percent. Although this level is twice that of a year ago, their torrid market share growth seems to have begun to cool.


The Turin auto show Sept. 26-28 featured 40 brands with displays; half were Chinese or Chinese-owned. (LUCA CIFERRI/AUTOMOTIVE NEWS EUROPE)

**SAIC, BYD, Chery fuel Chinese brands' growth in Europe**

The growth of Chinese automakers in Europe is manly driven by three groups: SAIC, which owns MG; BYD; and Chery, which sells the Omoda and Jaecoo brands, has just introduced its namesake Chery brand and debuted in Turin Lepas, a brand specializing in SUVs for young urban customers.

In the European Union plus the U.K., Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, collectively these three automakers accounted for almost 80 percent of the 432,088 sales from Chinese automakers in the first eight months, figures from market researcher Dataforce show.

Other Chinese automakers with significant sales in Europe included Geely Group (40,098) and DR Group (18,437). The remaining 30,000 units were distributed among some 20 brands.

There are other brands from China that have found some space in Europe, including Xpeng at 11,046 sales through August and Seres, sold here as DFSK, which found 7,198 buyers.

Great Wall, one of China's first newcomers to Europe, is still at a mere 2,831 sales in eight months.

**Aiways, Nio among fading early entrants in Europe**

Other early movers are already fading. Aiways sold a mere 119 units through August, a quarter of what it sold in the same period last year, while Nio was down by almost 50 percent to 614 units.

Nevertheless, an intense price war in China, fueled by domestic overcapacity estimated at half of the country's 55 million units of installed capacity, and a U.S. market de facto closed to Chinese automakers because of a 102.5 percent tariff, make Europe one of the few export destinations where it could be possible to gain significant volume.

Therefore, in Turin, in addition to Chery's Lepas, other new Chinese brands making early appearances in Europe included BYD's luxury brand, Denza; WM Motor, also known as Weltmeister; and MHero, a Dongfeng subsidiary that specializes in high-end SUVs.

Changan, the Chinese automaker with the largest design center in Europe, with more than 300 employees on the outskirts of Turin, showed its Deepal S05 and S07 sporty and stylish SUVs. After several stops and goes, Changan announced this summer that it would enter Europe next year.


The Geely EX5 comes with a lifetime warranty for the first 1,000 buyers in Europe. (LUCA CIFERRI/AUTOMOTIVE NEWS EUROPE)

Geely, the parent company of Volvo, Polestar, Zeeker and Lotus, for the debut of its namesake brand in Italy decided to offer a lifetime warranty for the first 1,000 buyers of its EX5 compact electric SUV and for the Starray EM-I plug-in hybrid. The lifetime warranty is connected to the owner and not to the car, so it is not transferable. It also doesn't cover the battery for the electric model, which comes with an eight-year warranty. Geely's standard warranty is six years or 150,000 km (93,000 miles).

Only time will tell if Europe has more room for additional products from Chinese automakers that are already established here. Eventually, new brands could carve out market share that makes their presence in Europe noticeable — and also financially viable.

But the fact that half the brands at a European auto show were Chinese indicates that many believe it's a bet worth making.