Mobility Special

2

Business. *Global.*

Move with the times

Technology, environmental concerns and global trade are rapidly changing the way we get around. Where are we headed?

A senior car executive recently visited MONOCLE's London HQ and spoke to the team about the shifts reshaping the automotive industry. In passing, they mentioned the average age of a new-car buyer in 2024. In Europe, they said, it's a staggering 55. With entry-level prices for many of the continent's top marques hovering at about €40,000, it's not surprising that the trade in used vehicles is so robust or that many choose to forgo car ownership altogether.

Then our visitor said something else that was nicely surprising. They make cars for men and women who like driving and are not fretting about autonomous vehicles sweeping away their business – far from it. (In a similar meeting almost 10 years ago, another car executive assured us that driverless vehicles would dominate by 2025.) It's conversations such as these that have shaped this year's mobility issue. While research into driverless cars, flying taxis and next-gen supersonic aircraft receive bountiful media coverage, they remain sideline issues for the people at the sharp end of the industry. Whether you are running a car brand, an aircraft maker or a bicycle-manufacturing plant, your business is almost certainly being shaped by a far more interesting set of fast-moving trends. Legacy car brands are looking askance at how China is challenging them in every market. Aviation players are grappling with the demands of legislators for cleaner aircraft. And many bicycle brands are wondering how they can come good on their environmental credentials if they are sourcing all of their parts from Taiwan, importing them to Europe for assembly, then shipping their completed bikes back to Asia.

Over the following pages, we'll look at the triumph of small cars (cheaper, nimbler in congested cities), as well as the automotive brands that have found success with modern people-carriers. We will take you to an air show to find out why alternative fuels have become such a hot topic and explore the consequences for re-engineering a city if you design public transport that elevates your journey. And we will also drop in on Romania's version of Detroit in its Motor City heyday. In short, we'll go beyond the usual headlines as we ask, what's next for mobility? — AT

Wheels up!
Get ready to explore the world of mobility. First stop: Toronto

1

1. Wingmen at work
2. Semi-translucent panels allow the assembly-line floor to be bathed in daylight

2

Business. *Toronto.*

Great and small

Aerospace company Bombardier is taking an enlightened approach to its new manufacturing hub.

WRITER Tomos Lewis
PHOTOGRAPHY Ian Patterson

At a new facility on the northwestern periphery of Toronto Pearson Airport, a fresh approach to aircraft manufacturing is taking off. "It's a real contrast to the old buildings that we occupied for 30 years," says Julien Boudreault, the vice-president of project management at Montréal-based aerospace firm Bombardier, which was founded in Québec in 1942.

Opened in May, this is where Bombardier makes its Global 6500 and 7500 series of business and private jets. The manufacturing hub marks several firsts for Canada's aircraft industry and signals a fresh focus for the storied manufacturer at a time when demand for its planes – from military, government and private clients – is in the ascendant.

Arrayed around the 71,500 sq m facility are jets at various stages of completion. On the morning when MONOCLE visits, we see electricians tweaking the cabling inside a plane's wing, while engineers review the underbelly of another. The lozenge-shaped doorway of a third aircraft is undergoing a mechanical inspection.

Unusually for a manufacturing hub of this scale and type, the staff members who are

"We are always bringing it back to this but a happy workforce is a productive workforce"

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1. Engine cabling
2. Tail-wings at the ready
3. Blast wall built to endure the force of an aircraft's engines
4. Production line
5. Take a step inside

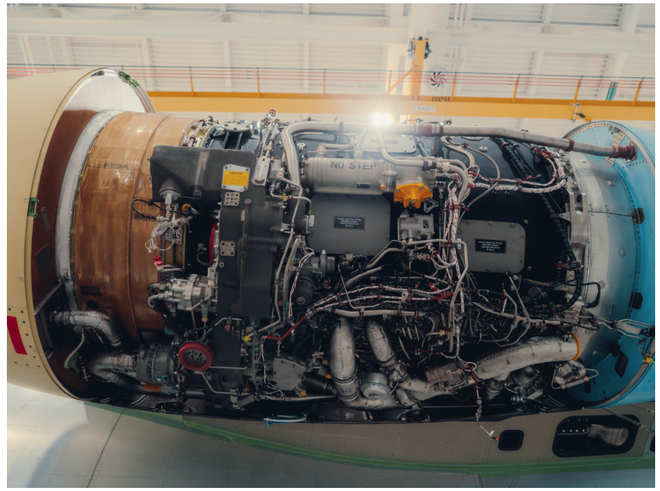
hard at work on the production floor aren't bathed in the glare of artificial lights hanging overhead. "We have unlocked the daylight," says Lilia Koleva, a partner and architect at Montréal-based practice NEUF, which designed the complex. "Architecturally, that is probably one of our biggest successes here."

"That might not seem like a lot but it feels significant when you have spent years in facilities that felt like caves, where you never saw the daylight while you worked," adds Boudreault. Translucent and semi-translucent panels are installed in the windows and hangar doors. Because of innovations in their design, they are as flame-resistant and combustion-proof as panels made from the heavier materials conventionally used in hangar construction, which tend to be impermeable to natural light. "All of a sudden, you get this new world where you can feel the sun and take it all in."

Smart but seemingly simple architectural interventions such as this can have multiple benefits. The purpose, in this case, is not only to elevate the working conditions on the assembly floor, where most of Bombardier's 2,000 or so Toronto-based personnel spend much of their time. According to Boudreault, the facility's design will also boost the mobility and efficiency of the company's production lines, at a time when demand for its aircraft is booming, following a major overhaul of the wider business in recent years.

Québécois mechanical engineer Joseph-Armand established Bombardier in the 1930s when he built Canada's first commercially available snow plough. The company was incorporated in 1942 and grew to become one of the country's best-known manufacturers, producing trains, aircraft and other vehicles. But in 2020, Bombardier sold its train-building and commercial-jet operations to focus on its private, business and defence divisions, as well as on its EcoJet facility, which is developing planes powered by electricity.

Currently, Bombardier's business is anchored by its Global series of jets. Once assembled in Toronto, the aircraft are flown to Montréal, where their interiors are furnished and finished before delivery. The series has set new standards for the duration that a twin-engine aircraft can stay airborne, as well as for fuel efficiency. In 2019 a Global 7500 aircraft broke an intercity record when it flew more than 15,200km from Sydney to Detroit non-stop, with ample fuel to spare.



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Meanwhile, the Global 6500 model has long been attractive to military and government clients for the high altitudes at which it can fly, as well as for its long lifespan and adaptability for intelligence-gathering and reconnaissance missions. Following the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in 2014, the Australian military deployed a Global 6500 to search vast areas of the Pacific Ocean. In December 2023, the US military placed an order for three Global 6500s, which it intends to equip as spy planes.

The private-jet use of celebrities and other wealthy people has received criticism in recent years – but even this unwanted scrutiny has increased interest in the Global series. Many prospective clients who are keen to acquire an aircraft that is gentler on the environment are turning to Bombardier. A new addition, the Global 8000, is under development and expected to be airborne late next year.

All of that, says Boudreault, explains why the innovative design of the new Toronto hub, which operates 24 hours a day, is so crucial in allowing Bombardier to play a role in shaping the future of mobility by air. "That's the science and art of a facility such as this: to be able to meet all of the requirements and generate operational efficiency, as well as a momentum and a flow that works."

The layout of the hangar allows every aircraft to be moved easily by crane from one stage of the production process to the next, from the attachment of the body to the wings at the beginning to the assembly of the cockpit and the engines. Tool stations and desks for project managers are nestled among the assembly lines; this ensures that parts, tools and other equipment can be retrieved quickly and that questions are answered promptly without the need for engineers to stray too far from the aircraft that they are working on.

Other aspects of the hangar design complement this. Self-service canteens and nicely appointed bathrooms have been built into the hangar's periphery, meaning that personnel don't have to take long, winding routes through the complex when they take a break.

"We are always bringing it back to this but a happy workforce is a productive workforce," says Boudreault. "That's why it was important for us to bring in all of these other elements and consider things that people wouldn't expect to find in an ordinary factory." — Ⓜ
bombardier.com

Going the distance
Able to fly non-stop for longer, Bombardier's Global 8000 will open up a new array of routes when it takes to the skies next year.

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Business. *UK.*

Reaching for the sky

Among the simulators, stalls and aerial displays of the Farnborough Air Show, the talk is of aviation's cleaner, quieter future.

WRITER Andrew Mueller
PHOTOGRAPHY Peter Flude

About three minutes ago, MONOCLE took off from downtown Brisbane. There's an empty seat to our left and two more behind us. The cabin is suspended beneath the wings of a pilotless electric aircraft, whose silver propellers hum away. "Wave if you feel woozy," says a disembodied voice. But airsickness won't be a problem, not least because we're sitting in a chair on an airfield in Hampshire, England, wearing a VR headset. The voice belongs to an employee of Wisk, the California-based Boeing subsidiary that built the pilotless air-taxi model in the middle of the tent.

It's quite a ride. The air taxi would offer a quick, scenic alternative to a tedious 30-minute car journey. And, if all goes according to plan, it might be a transfer option for visitors to the 2032 Brisbane Olympics. But will people be willing to fly in a vehicle without a human being at the controls? "It's like a driverless car," says Wisk's Carrie Bennett, who has clearly encountered this reservation before. "It's fascinating at first but then you forget about it because everything just works. And you don't have to worry about a child chasing a ball across the street."

The Farnborough Air Show is huge. It has more than 500 exhibitors and some 35,000 people visit over its five days. This year's iteration is quite quiet in terms of big orders for commercial jets, though that's possibly a reflection of an industry still searching for its level in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. At the last Farnborough before the virus struck, in 2018, a record 1,464 orders were placed with the two biggest manufacturers, Airbus and Boeing. In 2022, that figure was 441. This year, it's 256. Manufacturers are also beset by supply-chain difficulties, which are off-putting for potential buyers. Airbus has an order backlog of 8,585 aircraft; at current rates of production, that represents more than a 10-year wait. (Nevertheless, it's demonstrating the A321XLR, an extra-long-haul variant of its single-aisle workhorse, which Iberia hopes to start flying this year.)

Among those making purchases, Qatar Airways has made a particular effort, to the extent that the entrance to Farnborough's main exhibition hall resembles one of its tonier Business Class lounges, complete with a string duet and a Diptyque scent dispensary (the airline has confirmed an extension of its Boeing 777-9 order from 40 to 60). A physical presence is, however, no guarantee of sales. Brazilian manufacturer Embraer has parked on Farnborough's aprons a handsome black and turquoise E190F cargo jet but has announced no new commercial deals (Embraer has, however, sold six A-29 Super Tucano attack aircraft to Paraguay's air force).

Out with the international jet set

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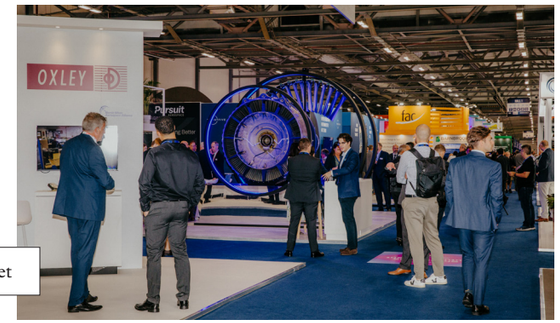
1. 'Is it a bird? Is it a plane?' (It's a plane)
2. Air India's new Airbus A350
3. High fliers
4. Aerospace companies setting out their stall
5. Commercial planes on show at Farnborough



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If there's one thing that demonstrates just how far the Farnborough Air Show has come since it was first staged in 1948, it is its focus on clean and renewable energy. Representatives of the aviation industry seem determined to stress that the environment has no stauncher allies. Suspend your cynicism, however, and you'll see that there's a lot going on in this realm. The hoardings of ZeroAvia boast of the UK-US firm's inclusion on lists of top green-technology companies. Rudolf Coertze, its head of research and development, explains that the firm is working towards having its zero-emission hydrogen-electric powertrains adapted to small passenger aircraft the size of a Cessna Caravan or a Dornier 228. And he says that it won't stop there. "There is no reason why this wouldn't ultimately work with a Boeing 737 or Airbus A320 – and that could be coming by 2035. It would remove a large fraction of emissions caused by aircraft."

Small aircraft will serve as pioneers in this regard. The Cassio is French start-up Voltaero's rear-propeller electric-hybrid aircraft. There are high hopes for the plane and Global Sky has reserved 15 of them during the show (232 were pre-ordered before the end of Farnborough). Jean Botti, Voltaero's CEO and a former chief technical officer at Airbus, is an enthusiastic salesman. He sits us in the pilots' seats and explains how the airframe can be adapted to carry passengers, post or cargo, or perform rescue operations. Future, larger models will have retractable

Want to take it for a spin?

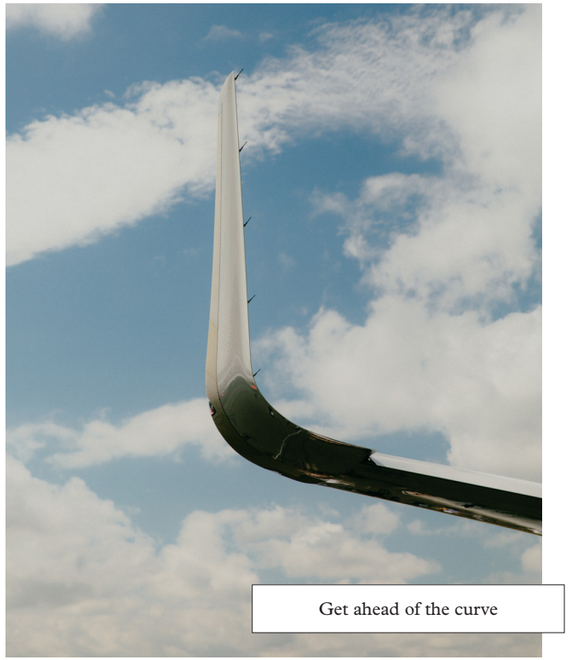
5

Mobility Special

undercarriages and pressurised cabins. “It could replace a lot of light aircraft and also compete with business aviation,” Botti tells MONOCLE. “There’s a lot of criticism of private jets and, of course, this is much, much cleaner. It will also be cheap to fly: €400 to €500 per hour.”

For all the talk of a cleaner, quieter future for aviation, some aspects are eternal. The most sophisticated machines will still need the most basic parts, someone will always be needed to build them and a marketplace as busy as the Farnborough Air Show will always help to sell them. Beagle Aircraft is based nearby in Dorset; customers for its components include BAE and Leonardo. Among the exhibits at its Farnborough stall are a cargo door from a business jet, an outer leading edge from the wing of a German Air Force Tornado and a flight simulator. “We didn’t make that,” says Beagle’s order-book manager, Tom Rosser. “But if you don’t have something to draw people in, they’ll walk by. And for the five or so minutes when they’re on the simulator, you have a captive audience. That lets us explain why the things that we make are important.”

Coming to Farnborough, says Prosser, isn’t just an exercise in PR outreach. A lot of meaningful business gets done here. “For a company our size – just 100 to 120 people – it wouldn’t be worth doing as a loss leader,” he says. “Last year we paid for the stand with the sales that we made on the first day. And the lunches definitely help to get agreements over the line.” — Ⓜ



Get ahead of the curve

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Automatic for the people
Though autonomous aircraft will initially be small, there are companies now insisting that there’s no practical reason why airliners can’t be programmed to fly as reliably as any drone.

Follow that cab!

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3

Ready to go the distance

4

1. Curved wingtips of a British Airways Airbus A320neo
2. Wisk’s four-seat autonomous air taxi
3. If I just press here...
4. Airbus A321XLR, with a range of more than 8,700km
5. Voltaero’s Cassio electric hybrid plane
6. Qatar Airways Boeing 787 Dreamliner
7. Europa XS monoplane

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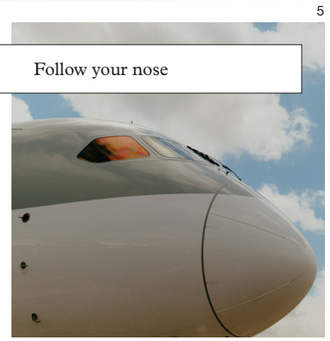
Follow your nose



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Top three deals at Farnborough

Flynas
The biggest deal at this year’s event was between Airbus and Riyadh-based Flynas, Saudi Arabia’s first low-cost airline. Flynas is best known as the airline of choice for budget-conscious pilgrims visiting Mecca: during the last Hajj season, the airline filled 100,000 seats. It is now significantly expanding its all-Airbus fleet, ordering 130 A320s and 30 A330s, with delivery to begin in 2027 – a huge move by an airline whose current fleet consists of just 64 aircraft.

Japan Airlines
This year, Japan Airlines (JAL) finalised orders for 20 Airbus A350-900s and 11 A321neos, and for 10 Boeing 787-9s, with an option on 10 further 787s. The A350 order was reduced by one from the terms announced in March: the 21st had been intended as a replacement for the JAL A350 lost in a runway collision at Tokyo Haneda in January but JAL has decided that it can live without it. Boeing was clearly grateful for the 787 order: the firm’s senior vice-president, Brad McMullen, went out of his way to thank JAL for sticking with the company.

Korean Air
Boeing’s recent difficulties were reflected by a restrained presence at Farnborough. The much delayed 777-9, for example, was only represented by a mock-up of its cabin. So, Boeing will have appreciated the vote of confidence from Korean Air, which signed for 20 777-9s, 20 787-10s and options on another 10 787-10s – a reported outlay of $12.6bn (€11.5bn). Due for delivery in 2028, these will be a significant boost to Korean Air’s fleet ahead of the completion of its long-planned acquisition of Asiana Airlines.

FLYING TAXIS

Up in the air

Global

In *The Jetsons*, flying cars glide effortlessly around Orbit City (*writes Jakob Funkenstein*). But since the cartoon was first broadcast in 1962, the basic airframe and engine designs of large and small commercial aeroplanes haven’t changed very much. However, a new generation of electric vertical takeoff and landing (EVTOL) light aircraft will soon enter the market, promising to revolutionise urban transportation. EVTOL makers, prospective operators and vertiport companies claim that these vehicles will end traffic gridlock and shorten commutes – and your ride will be fully autonomous. Though it’s unlikely that we will be riding in private EVTOLs 10 or 20 years from now, we might see ride-sharing in high-density locations, such as airports, sports venues and tourist attractions.

A huge effort is now under way to figure out the infrastructure needs of EVTOL operations in big cities. Traffic and avoiding collisions with other aircraft are key concerns. Vertiport construction also represents a major investment – the more landing pads, the better. However, that requires space, which is costly. All of the investment required in design certification and infrastructure development begs the question: will the end product be affordable to ordinary users? Every player appears to have a different solution for making urban air transport economically viable. Manufacturers such as Joby and Archer are so confident that not only are they producing EVTOLs, they are planning to operate them too.

How the fare of an EVTOL ride is calculated will depend on factors including distance and demand but operators will probably have to charge many times more than the current land-based taxi firms. There’ll be technology enthusiasts who will jump at the chance to be one of the first to try out this next-generation commute but there’s no guarantee that even they will remain loyal EVTOL users.

If you build it, will they come? In Paris, a protest movement called *Taxis volants Non merci* is already opposing the idea. Safety concerns aside, the movement argues that it’s not worth paying social costs such as extra noise, let alone the desecration of Paris’s skyline. So it might be decades before average citizens can hail an air-taxi. — Ⓜ

Funkenstein teaches aviation management at IU Internationale Hochschule in Berlin.

2

Business. *Manila.*

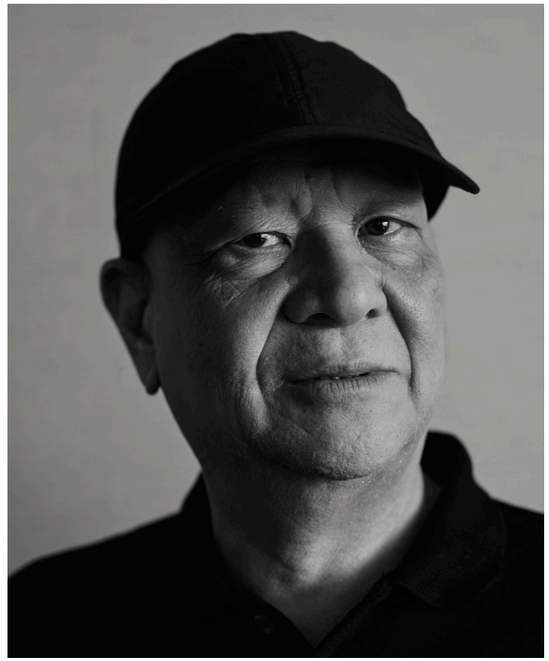
Hold my beer

How did the CEO of a brand best known for its pilsner become the architect of the Philippines' infrastructure revolution?

WRITER James Chambers
PHOTOGRAPHY Sanjeev Thakur

For frequent flyers travelling in and out of the Philippines, September can't come soon enough. That's when the state-owned operator of Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), Metro Manila's chronically congested main gateway, hands over the keys to a consortium led by the San Miguel Group.

The publicly listed conglomerate has taken on the challenge of fixing NAIA and expectations are sky-high. The public-private partnership even got a mention in president Ferdinand Marcos Jr's July state-of-the-nation address. "Once considered among the world's worst and most stressful airports, [NAIA] will soon be a world-class international hub that we can be proud of," he said. Is the president correct? "Yeah, 100 per cent. I have no doubt that we can turn around the airport," says Ramon Ang, San Miguel's CEO and largest shareholder. "Within a year you will not see any runway or terminal congestion," he adds, before committing to notable improvements by Christmas – peak travel time for a majority Catholic country with millions of overseas workers.



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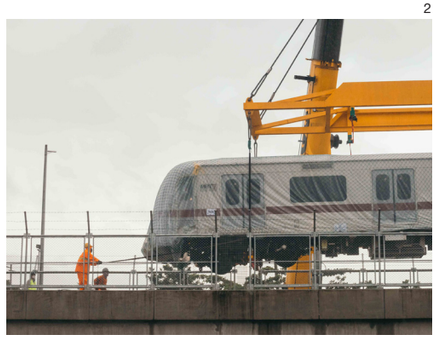

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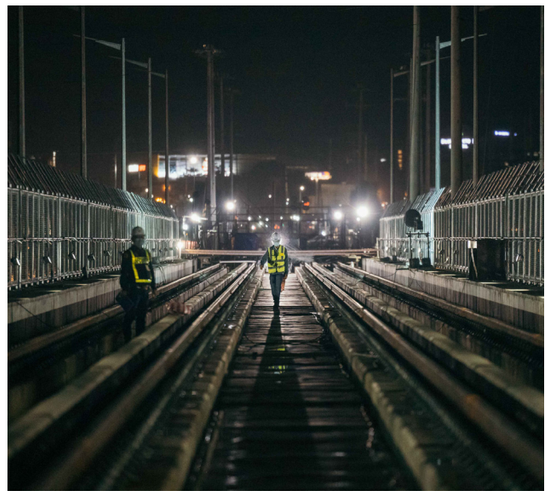

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1. Ramon Ang, CEO of San Miguel
2. Toll roads are decongesting downtown Metro Manila
3. Hyundai Rotem rolling stock being lowered onto the tracks for testing
4. Walking the MRT-7 line
5. Full steam ahead

"If I become a famous politician for six years, what's the good of that? I will have divested all of my shares in my company and made thousands of enemies"

San Miguel might sound like an unlikely saviour. The beer brand is principally known outside the Philippines for its eponymous pilsner, which dates back to the company's formation in 1890 during the Spanish colonial period. But much has changed under Ang's stewardship. A series of acquisitions over the past 15 years have transformed what was predominantly a food and beverage company with an annual turnover of €3.7bn into a €24bn-a-year juggernaut with interests in power generation, oil refinement, water, banking, roads, railways, seaports and cement. "Whatever business we do, our purpose is to make money for the shareholders and develop the country," says Ang, explaining the logic behind his diversification strategy.

MONOCLE visits Ang at San Miguel's headquarters in Mandaluyong, one of the 17 cities that make up the Metro Manila region. The understated captain of industry, a child of Chinese immigrants, arrives at the office most days behind the wheel of a Toyota Camry or Land Cruiser. A car enthusiast and mechanical engineering graduate, he began his career importing Japanese vehicles before joining San Miguel in his forties and becoming one of the Philippines' richest tycoons.

Ang's approach has been to buy small existing businesses and grow them into industry leaders. San Miguel's infrastructure division began 15 years ago with the acquisition of a tollway company and is now the biggest operator in the country. It opened a series of elevated "skyways" in recent years, drawing traffic away from local roads and decongesting the sole expressway linking the capital's north and south. A two-hour journey in heavy traffic can now take 30 minutes and a few crosstown friendships have been reconnected in the process.

Ang's enthusiasm for building roads, however, has attracted criticism for tethering Metro Manila's future to four wheels. But as with the San Miguel-owned oil refinery Petron, which is gradually moving away from fossil fuels, the green transition has to be incremental, realistic and government-assisted. "Cars are the main transportation in Asia," says Ang. "Our problem is we are adding hundreds of thousands of cars a year without phasing out the old ones."

Rail is the one mode of transport where San Miguel has almost had to start from scratch. The company is building a 14-station rail line that, once operational at the end of 2025, will carry up to 850,000 passengers a day between the Bulacan province and Quezon City, Metro Manila's largest municipality. The first major mass-transit project this century, MRT 7 will allow commuters to switch to two other lines at an interchange station – a national first. A north-south commuter railway and a subway funded by the Japanese government will soon follow, as part of what President Marcos labelled a "railway renaissance".

"San Miguel has a lot of projects that help the development of the Philippines," says Janno Quinto, project manager at station six in Quezon City, where construction

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1. New roads have to find a way through the dense capital city
2. Dredgers deepen rivers to prevent flooding

is almost complete. Quinto, who is dressed in an obligatory high-vis vest and hard hat, recently joined from a rival toll-road company to work on elevated structures. The 29-year-old engineer stands on an empty, unfinished platform, pointing out the electrified third rail – another first. "Transportation is the way to our development," he says.

A seasonal typhoon has just passed by Metro Manila, cancelling flights and causing flooding. San Miguel has been dredging rivers to facilitate drainage and Ang shares his opinion on what structural improvements are required to weather future storms – both natural and manmade. The patriotic Filipino is fully invested in the country's disaster resilience and the decisive leadership he demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic – distributing food, medical assistance and other aid – even led to calls for him to run for president in 2022. "If I become a famous politician for six years, what's the good of that?" he says, dismissing the idea. "I will have divested all of my shares in my company and made thousands of enemies."

RSA, as he is known to colleagues, can achieve more by sticking to what he's good at. What's his best deal to date? NAIA, he says, without hesitation. "We've been given the opportunity to improve the main gateway to the Philippines," adds Ang, who turned 70 this year. It's a surprising choice given that the commercial terms have been pilloried in the business pages for, oddly enough, being overly generous. A consortium in which San Miguel owns a stake won the NAIA public tender in 2022 with a bid that will earn the government $20bn (€18.5bn) and a 60 per cent cut of profits. Characteristically confident, Ang believes that he can't lose. After all, what's good for the Philippines is ultimately good for San Miguel.

Re-engineering NAIA is part of a slate of major infrastructure projects that Ang wants to see completed over the next three to five years before handing the San Miguel reins over to his eldest son, John Paul. Building an entirely new airport to serve the capital is unquestionably the jewel in his crown and the $7bn (€6.5bn) investment will almost certainly define Ang's legacy.

The New Manila International Airport, as it is currently known, is in Bulacan, a province immediately north of Metro Manila. Site preparation was completed this year and construction will soon get under way. Once up and running, three or four years from now, Bulacan will become Metro Manila's equivalent to Incheon in Seoul or Narita in Tokyo, while NAIA will be a Gimpo or Haneda. "There is no compromise in our new airport. It will be ideal," says Ang, while scoring all of Asia's major airports, from an engineering rather than tourism perspective. "Four parallel runways with 2km separation, good for 100 to 200 million passengers a year and a 30-minute drive or train journey to anywhere in Metro Manila."

"There is a risk but we have to take it. My greatest mistake is not to be more aggressive. You win some, you lose some"

It's a case of better late than never. During the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, when most developed Asian capitals were building a second airport, consecutive administrations in the Philippines dithered. Southeast Asia's fourth-largest economy is now 30 years behind many of its peers and the aviation industry's shortcomings are emblematic of a broader infrastructure deficit.

Closing this gap has been a flagship policy of the past three presidents. In any democracy, though, forming policy is one thing and implementing it is quite another. Ang first pitched his new airport to president Benigno Aquino III in 2012. Aquino's successor, Rodrigo Duterte, finally approved it in 2018. The straight-talking CEO has little to gain, though, from picking sides or apportioning blame. All governments are basically the same from his perspective and he must work with whoever occupies the Malacañang Palace – the Filipino White House.

Is Ang betting his company on aviation? The new airport must attract about 36.5 million passengers to break even, he says, while NAIA will reach almost 50 million this year. "There is a risk but we have to take it," he adds, revealing the missed opportunities that motivate him more than any fear of failure. By his own count, he has walked away from five potential investments that have "cost" the company a whopping $100bn (€92.7bn) – and Ang countless hours of sleep. "My greatest mistake is not to be more aggressive," he says. "You win some, you lose some."

Towards the end of the decade, once San Miguel's airports, toll roads and railway projects are complete, its visionary CEO envisages vehicular traffic and investment dollars beginning to flow from the national capital, home to most of the economic activity, to the north of the Philippines' largest island, Luzon, where land is cheap. Traffic in Metro Manila will ease, seasonal flooding will be less severe and the country will be better placed to attract Thailand's tourism numbers and compete for the foreign direct investment typically funnelled into Vietnam.

Metro Manila's reputation for violence will be the last remaining sticking point – no amount of concrete can cover up international headlines about kidnappings, drug wars and extrajudicial killings. This bad publicity will have to change, Ang says, if the Philippines is going to attract the likes of Samsung and Taiwan Semiconductor. His passionate monologue has the makings of a future stump speech delivered to a crowd of potential voters. President Ang in 2028? "Politics is not me," he says, definitively. "I'm happy now that I'm able to prepare San Miguel's succession plan, see the company continue to do well and be able to help the community. Mission accomplished." — Ⓜ

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Two wheels or four?
Motorcycle ownership in Metro Manila has quadrupled in the past decade. But with congestion set to improve, it will be interesting to see the direction of two-wheel travel.

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2

Business. *Sydney.*

Tunnel vision

A new metro line and redesigned stations are improving commutes in Australia's biggest city.

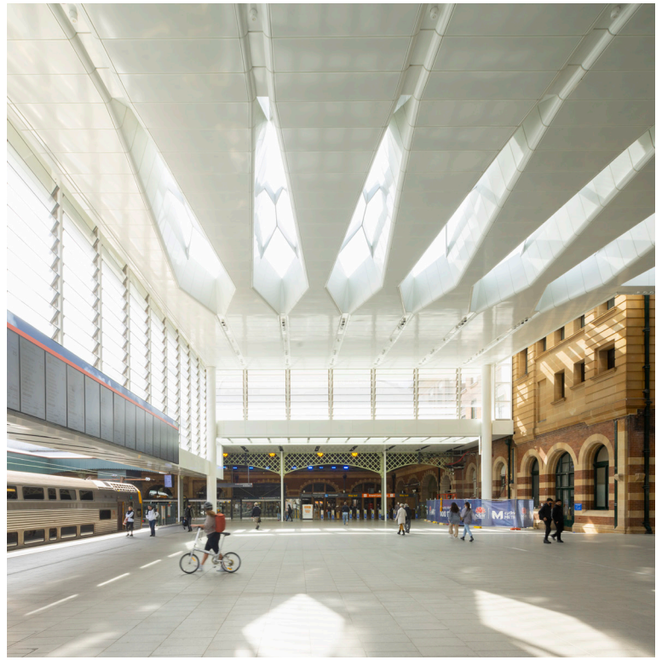
WRITER Callum McDermott
PHOTOGRAPHY Brett Boardman

Many of the features that make Sydney an astoundingly beautiful city – its dramatic coastline, narrow central streets and low, rolling hills – are the same things that conspire to make it a frustrating place in which to commute. Here, the notion of getting from your doorstep to desk in less than an hour is often so unrealistic that it's downright fantastical. But that might not be the case for much longer.

The new phase of the Sydney Metro, the City Line, is due to open this month, transforming the way that Sydneysiders move through Australia's largest metropolis. The multiphase Sydney Metro project, first announced in 2011 and in construction since 2014, is the country's biggest public-transport plan; an audacious, decades-long effort to deliver Oceania's first mass rapid-transit system. Its ambition is to connect the city's outer reaches and second international airport with the central business district – and the crowning jewel is the City Line, with its six new stations.

"It's one of the biggest public transport projects since the Harbour Bridge, so it's going to completely transform Sydney," says Jason Hammond, director for design at Sydney Metro. "It will make the journey easier for everyone using the city, from people coming in for leisure at the weekend to office workers during the day. Sydney won't know what's hit it." The metro is using customised versions of French manufacturer Alstom's high-speed, driverless Metropolis trains, which arrive at stations at peak hours every four minutes, almost halving travel times for train passengers in the city centre. Hammond is relishing the opportunity to speed up Sydneysiders' lives. "We're expecting 264,000 trips on a typical weekday, moving 37,000 people during the morning peak," he says. "One of the key things is to relieve congestion on existing central business district stations and spread the load across the network."

Global architecture firm John McAslan + Partners was selected for two of the most important tasks in the project: designing the new Waterloo Station and upgrading Central Station to become metro-ready (the latter in collaboration with Australian-founded design firm Woods Bagot). In 2012, McAslan delivered the Kings Cross Western Concourse, a global benchmark in station design, and it looked to that success when considering the challenge of untangling the commuting knot at the heart of Central Station. As Australia's busiest train station and Sydney's main transport hub, Central Station has weathered an accretion of extensions and additions over the years, but few changes have been as drastic, or as well-received, as McAslan's.



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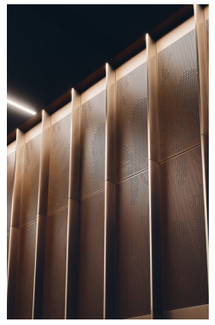

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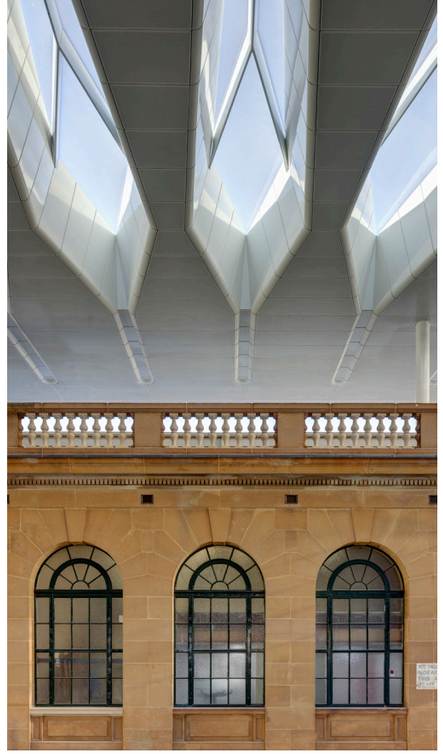
1. Waterloo Station's northern concourse
2. Bronze-coloured wall linings on the platform
3. Arches and a new roof
4. Ready for the commuters

"It's one of the biggest public transport projects since the Harbour Bridge, so it's going to completely transform Sydney"

"We tried to help this heritage building sing and be the best version of itself," says Troy Uleman, director of John McAslan + Partners Sydney, as he and MONOCLE tap into the newest section of Central Station. "It comes down to that user experience. It's not just about the station itself or the experience outside the building but how you move through it and use it to connect yourself from place to place." McAslan's improvements include a central walkway that, though nominally designed to allow access to the new metro, has also provided escalators and easier access to every train platform in the station. It can be accessed by a new northern concourse set beneath a soaring roof that crests over a cluster of Central Station's sandstone buildings. "It was about having a great public room for Central Station," says Uleman. "It's an organising space that connects to everything." Crucially for any large station, there's room for hapless commuters to dither while they figure out which train to catch, without getting in anyone's way. "We made room for those little places for people to stand in a corner or catch up," says Uleman.

Nods to the building's past abound, including the use of arches and sandstone, as well as a custom typeface made with old platform lettering. But the station's new metro future is alluded to throughout, including in the walls, where engravings of clocks gradually fade away in a representation of Sydney's timetable-free reality, where the next train is only a few minutes away. — Ⓜ

IMAGE: *Shutterstock*



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Non-stop service
Sydney's next milestone will be the opening of a route with six stations linking the city to the new Western Sydney Airport in 2026.

4

UNDERGROUND RAIL

Paying its way

Lagos

According to a study by the American Public Transportation Association, transit schemes can create 49,700 jobs per €920m invested. This is something that Lagos – notorious for its traffic and crowded roads – is hoping yields rewards with its €124m investment in urban transport.

The megacity, with more than 16.5 million residents, is in a state of perpetual rush hour, so Lagosians were elated when former president Muhammadu Buhari opened the Blue Line, the first phase of the Lagos Rail Mass Transit system, last year. This 12km rail corridor spanning some of the city's densest suburbs has now been complemented by the 37km Red Line. Journeys that once took more than two and a half hours have been shaved down to about 35 minutes. With a carrying capacity of some 500,000 passengers daily, the project will have a huge impact on commuters' lives.

The history of the metro dates to 1983 when the idea was conceived by then state governor Lateef Jakande. Its first phase was due for completion in 1986 but when the government was toppled in a coup in 1985, the junta leader scrapped the initiative. The project was then resuscitated in the 2000s with building works commencing in 2009. Several administrations since it was revived, the project is only now being realised.

The wait has proved timely. Fuel prices have skyrocketed following the removal of a subsidy, increasing the costs of transportation. The metro is not only helping to build the economy but saving residents money. — OA

2

Business. *Mioveni.*

Start your engines

Smart and understated, Dacia is going from strength to strength. We visit its plant to see how the car brand is driving success.

WRITER Ed Stocker
PHOTOGRAPHER David Payr

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1. Dacia's new Duster during final checks at the Mioveni plant
2. Cars in progress
3. Getting hands-on

The rumble and thud of heavy industry is overwhelming. Inside the stamping department at Dacia's production plant in Mioveni, Romania, sheet metal is being sandwiched under pressure to create doors for the car brand's new Duster model. For the robotic machinery to do its thing, huge, heavy moulds are being manoeuvred across the hangar by a yellow crane arm that spans the entire 15-metre length of the roof. "This is the high speed line," shouts Alina Predescu, the department's senior manager and a Dacia employee for the past 15 years, referencing the equipment on display. The combined 12 lines that operate here produce 4.5 million pieces a month. Next, they're passed to the body shop where the cars start to take form.

To call Mioveni a production hub would be an understatement. Opened in 1968 during the early years of Nicolae Ceausescu's Socialist Republic of Romania, the Dacia factory is a beast that almost never sleeps. Operating 24 hours a day over three shifts, it rests only on Sundays. A car is produced here every 55 seconds, while 350,000 cars roll off its production line each year. The figures are a testament to the phenomenal success of Dacia in recent years. The brand was long seen as a budget, no-frills player but has morphed into much more. Dacia now sells more than 650,000 cars a year and its Sandero recently became the best-selling car in Europe. The relationship, though, is reciprocal; Dacia wouldn't be where it is today without its historic mothership plant, located about a 90-minute drive northwest of the capital, Bucharest.

When Monocle visits the plant – a series of grey, flat-roofed buildings surrounded by large car parks – we're told to imagine it more as a town than a factory. On a map, its 288 hectares look almost as big as Mioveni itself, which sits below the plant's slightly raised vantage point next to woodland. Before Dacia arrived, Mioveni (pronounced with a short "I" at the end) was a sleepy village of about 6,000 inhabitants. Today the automotive town is home to 30,000 people. Many Mioveni residents have either worked here or know someone who has – attracted by what one employee calls a job opportunity "gold mine". With revenue of €5bn a year, the plant represents some 2 per cent of Romania's GDP and about 2 per cent of its exports.

Dacia began by mass-producing cars for the local market through a licensing agreement with Renault. Car kits were dispatched from France and assembled in Romania under a local brand name, though the plant shifted to making its own parts not long after. Dacia's debut model, the 1100, was based on the Renault 8 and its second car on the Renault 12. That relationship came full circle in 1999, when the Paris-based multinational bought the brand. Renault's CEO at time, Louis Schweitzer, had been to Russia and seen the success of Lada. He was convinced that there was a worldwide gap in the market for Dacia, especially in post-Iron Curtain Eastern Europe.

With Renault's arrival, efficiencies were greatly increased. Monocle is anecdotally told that before that, in the 1970s and 1980s, 30,000 employees were producing 100,000 cars a year, with capacity tripling at the plant between 2004 and 2010. "The factory has changed each year," says the plant's general manager, Sile Fulga, who has been here since 1987, wearing a Dacia logo wristband to protect his watch. "In 2000, we didn't have any robots." Underlying Dacia's expansion has been an idea that

"I was born with Dacia. And for many Romanians, it's the same thing"

counters the trends of the automobile industry. There has been a push back against the expensive bells-and-whistles cars that had already started to come onto the market at the end of the 1990s. "The idea was to say, what if we have a piece of the group that would not play the game of always more," Dacia's CEO Denis le Vot, also group chief supply chain officer, tells MONOCLE. Under Renault's stewardship, Dacia launched the no-nonsense Logan model in saloon and estate versions, which came with wind-down windows and no air conditioning.

The car bodies being welded together by automated arms when MONOCLE visits are very different from those of the original Logan. Given how popular SUVs are worldwide – representing more than half of all sales in Europe – Dacia's decision to pivot to an SUV look for most of its cars has proved prescient, even if many of them are smaller superminis, compact SUVs and crossovers. But Le Vot says that, though some aspects have changed, "the spirit is the same". The less-is-more concept, for example, still prevails.

Some might call them under-equipped but Le Vot prefers to say that Dacia produces cars with only the essential features. "We like to quit anything that is not strictly necessary," he says, adding that the idea of "essentiality" is nonetheless shifting all the time given the types of vehicles coming onto the secondhand market, often a direct competitor of Dacia. Its cars feature manually adjusted seating, plastic over leather upholstery and understated screens; air conditioning, once deemed a luxury, is now part of the package. For a long time, Dacia also shunned lane-keep assist – the sometimes tedious feature that steers you back onto the road should you drift outside the lines – as too much technology, but new EU safety regulations mean that this is now part of the brand's essentiality too.

One of the less visible reasons why Dacia has become a superstar of the region – and beyond – is the way it has been run by Renault. Though brand studios in France might get design input, Dacia has been allowed to keep plenty of devolved powers, maintaining a 3,000-strong engineering corps in Bucharest, as well as a Romanian design team. There is a strong focus on what the Dacia CEO calls "design to cost". Dacia cars are created with a sharp focus on the core things that matter to consumers in a process meant to separate real value from unnecessary technical glitz. Despite its range of cars, with the exception of its single electric model, Dacia also keeps the same platform across its catalogue – all the bits out of the consumer's view, including the bulk of the body structure, axles and even a lot of the powertrains – which lowers costs. Lastly, Dacia taps Renault Group HQ and its R&D, which Le Vot refers to as "big brother", to borrow technology developed years earlier.

The city of Mioveni is dominated by the St Peter and Paul Cathedral, with its distinct orthodox spires, which sits just off a main thoroughfare. Inaugurated little more than a decade ago, it's one of the many buildings constructed here since the 1970s – many of them nondescript communist-era blocks – as the population started to grow. Walking around town, the influence of Dacia is difficult to miss. The yellow taxis driving around the streets are Dacias, as are the police cars, both Logan models. The workers in blue overalls fixing up the square arrive in a Dacia pick-up, while a family of three we talk to is driving a workhorse Dacia Solenza from 2003 that needs pushing to get its engine going.

Later, we meet members of a local Dacia classic car club, all eager to show off their vintage models. Catalin Francu was a driver for Dacia in the 1980s and 1990s during the company's original foray into rally car racing (Dacia recently announced that it would be joining Dakar Rally from 2025). Like many people, for Francu there's a pride and perhaps even sentimentality attached to a brand that is still seen as indivisible from Romania itself. "I was born with Dacia," he says. "And for many Romanians, it's the same thing." Both Alin Stanciu, owner of a 2003 Dacia 1310 estate, and Catalin Filip, whose 1969 1100 turns plenty of heads as people walk past, agree. Stanciu talks about a "nostalgia" for Dacia that clearly comes from where he has grown up. "It's normal because everyone has a connection to the plant," he says. "Four members of my family worked there."

Still, present-day Dacia wants to be seen as much more than Romanian, even if CEO Le Vot calls it the heart of the brand. "Dacia is Romanian but Dacia goes way beyond Romania," he says. "The uniqueness of the brand is not specifically the geography, though the history is linked to the geography." For one, Romania is no longer the top sales market, with top spot going to France followed by Italy. The Mioveni plant also isn't the only factory producing cars. Le Vot is quick to add that Mioveni has a "bright future" but there are two plants in Morocco that make what the CEO calls the "low drive", more budget cars such as the Sandero and Logan, as well as the seven-seater Jogster. The Mioveni plant focuses on higher-end cars, including the Duster.

Part of that gradual shift in brand orientation involved a redesign of the Dacia logo in 2021, which started to feature on new cars from the following year. It's one of the many logo iterations we see on Dacias during our time in Romania. The kissing "D" and "C" feels modern and has been coupled with Dacia moving away from its traditional blue to an olive green. This has been complemented by lifestyle advertising that makes Dacia feel outdoorsy. Le Vot, quoting the brand markers, says that it's all part of being "robust and outdoors, eco smart and essential but cool".

Alongside the brand's first electric car, the China-made Spring, which hit the UK in October (a first-generation model has been available in other markets for longer), 2025 will see the release of a large suv, the Bigster – a bid to cash in on that lucrative segment of the market. It will be made right here in Mioveni, from the metal stamping to the final conveyor-belt quality control.

Alongside the evolving look and feel, Le Vot argues that the way Dacia is perceived continues to shift. While he says that Dacia is "still the cheapest on the block" for those who want it, buyers aren't just secondhand car owners looking for the only new car they can afford. Premium brands have become so expensive, he says, that plenty of new Dacia owners have gravitated from higher-end players. It means that 70 per cent of Dacia's sales are now made up of its most expensive models. "The market is coming to us," he says. And with it, Dacia's evolution continues apace. — Ⓜ

Sizing up
Renault has seen growth in medium and large-sized cars, and Dacia wants a piece of the action. Its Bigster is out next year and two more similar-sized bodies are planned for the near future.

Mioveni workers with their 2008 Dacia Logan pick-up

Catalin Filip with his Dacia 1100 from 1969

A 1974 Dacia 1300 parked in central Mioveni

Mioveni policeman with his Dacia Logan patrol car

1 2

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Business. *Vienna.*

From car to chopper

Motorists' club ÖAMTC has shifted gear to offer air-rescue services and even welcome cyclists. We sign up for a day.

WRITER Alexei Korolyov
PHOTOGRAPHY Andreas Jakwerth

It's a warm July afternoon and the rotor blades of a canary-yellow Airbus H135 helicopter are turning lazily on the roof of the ÖAMTC headquarters in eastern Vienna. In the near distance, the radar atop the city's international airport's air-traffic-control tower seems to mirror their movement. Then, suddenly, as if the wind has just picked up with furious haste, the blades whizz into action, propelling the helicopter up into the clear blue sky, leaving a burst of downwash in its wake.

The ÖAMTC (Der Österreichische Automobil, Motorrad und Touringclub) was founded in 1946 as an automobile and motorcycle club serving the burgeoning numbers of Austrian car owners. For decades it mostly provided breakdown cover but, in recent years, as a future without internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles has become ever more likely, the ÖAMTC has undergone a reinvention. Today it is a one-stop shop for all things mobility. It still provides its members with roadside assistance but is also branching out into, among other things, travel and tourism. Its glassy, UFO-like headquarters in the Austrian capital, which opened in 2017, is meant to symbolise this transition. Perhaps most radically for a motorists' association, today there are many cyclists among the ÖAMTC's 2.5 million members who can take advantage of roadside bicycle assistance delivered by mechanics who ride around on electric bikes. On the car side of things, meanwhile, increasing numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) are being serviced, meaning that technicians must be as well versed in the battery-powered as in the ICE.

Launched in 1983, the association's air rescue service, which provides medevac assistance across Austria, was the precursor to this diversification. The ÖAMTC has 21 air bases across the country, with a 31-strong fleet of Airbus H135s. The upkeep of these €7m aircraft is financed

1. Rescuer Ebner ready for takeoff
2. Ebner (on left) and Captain Robert Gallmayer

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“The work here is not about me or shareholder value. Everything we do at the ÖAMTC is about how we can improve to better help our members and our patients”

3

1. Command room shelf, with a statuette of St Christopher, the patron saint of travellers
2. Rear doors of an ÖAMTC Airbus H135
3. Tools of the trade
4. Taking off for a mission
5. Marco Trefanitz, CEO of ÖAMTC Air Rescue
6. Control panel inside the helicopter cockpit

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partly through ÖAMTC membership fees and partly through government funding and insurance contributions. Though the ÖAMTC is an NGO, it works closely with state and regional authorities, a common practice in Austria and Germany, where clubs and associations (known as *Vereine*) frequently perform critical state-adjacent duties.

Co-ordinating the ÖAMTC’s air-rescue operations is CEO Marco Trefanitz, a cool-as-a-cucumber former telecommunications executive, who doesn’t bat an eyelid or raise his voice when the helicopter whisks into action. “The whole system is organised by the state, which runs the dispatch centres in the nine provinces of Austria and sends calls through to us,” says Trefanitz as he invites MONOCLE to sit down in the rescue team’s helipad-side rest area, which features an array of dumbbells and exercise machines. There is an adjacent kitchen and storage room, as well as a command centre dominated by a large monitor streaming live footage from around the country, alongside real-time weather maps. Long-haired and open-shirted, Trefanitz, who assumed his position in 2012, doesn’t look like the typical Austrian CEO. There’s a bit more pressure in his new job than in his previous one but he insists that it is far more rewarding. “The work here is not about me or shareholder value. Everything we do at the ÖAMTC is about how we can improve to better help our members and our patients.”

About five minutes after rushing off, the H135 returns. “*Storno*,” mouths Captain Robert Gallmayer as he climbs out of the cockpit: “cancelled”. False alarms are routine. About 10 per cent of calls are made as a precaution rather than a necessity, says Gallmayer after the rotors have died down and it’s possible to talk normally again. Often, he is already airborne while the call is still in progress; sometimes, the operator might conclude that ground vehicles are sufficient for the job, which means flying back to base to refuel and await another call. Gallmayer, lead pilot among 13 at the Vienna base (there are 71 across the entire ÖAMTC), has already flown two missions today, a normal number for this time of year as hundreds of thousands of Austrians begin their summer holidays. Both Gallmayer’s earlier missions involved dropping divers into the Danube in search of missing swimmers; one was pulled out alive, while the other sadly could not be found.

Another common call requires retrieving someone who has had a stroke or heart attack from a mountainside or forest track. Indeed, car accidents or breakdowns are in the minority, with helicopters only called to the scene when the injured need to be rushed to hospital. During the summer, there are usually about five or six missions a day, and the feedback section of the ÖAMTC air rescue’s website gives heartening indication of how successful these predominately are. Pride of place among the comments and photos is given to a child’s drawing of those famous yellow helicopters. Below it reads, simply, “Thank you for saving us.” — Ⓜ

Steering committees

As people diversify the way they travel, car-focused organisations would do well to follow their lead. For the ÖAMTC, what began as a way of helping members has morphed into a vital service.

2

Business. *Italy.*

Breaking ranks

In Florence – as in many other cities – Ford's Tourneo Custom is now the executive taxi to hail.

WRITER Nic Monisse

PHOTOGRAPHY Camillo Pasquarelli

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Looking for a vehicle to shuttle you between fashion shows at Pitti Uomo in Florence? Or are you on the hunt for a driver to whisk you around Milan during Salone del Mobile next year? If so, you might find yourself buckled into a Ford Tourneo Custom. The 2024 edition of the smart-looking people-mover that can carry up to nine passengers is quietly becoming the executive car service's vehicle of choice in Italy.

"It's an elegant yet comfortable car to drive," says Stefano Ciappi, who MONOCLE trails for a morning on the road in Florence, where he's taking clients to the airport or between events in his newly minted Tourneo Custom. Ciappi, who runs chauffeur business Chianti Drive, which services central Tuscany, bought the vehicle earlier this summer. The driver's preference for the US brand is unusual in a sector where the ubiquitous Mercedes Benz V-Class people-mover currently reigns supreme – but Ciappi says that's likely to change. "The Tourneo Custom is going to be really popular in the chauffeur and taxi industry in Italy," he says. "I already have several taxi-driver colleagues trying it. They're satisfied with it because it's comfortable for both the driver and the passengers. It's absolutely on the way to being a success."

The Tourneo Custom has been in production since 2012 but has had a dramatic overhaul for 2024, which has generated a renewed interest in the vehicle. There are sleek new headlights and a refined front grille but the game-changing component has been the introduction of a seating mechanism that allows for all nine seats to slide and rotate within the cabin. It's a move that allows seating layouts to change to suit the needs of the customer: rows of three chairs can be turned to face each other, creating a "conference" configuration; or they can be twisted to face the same direction for a more solitary ride. There has also been a significant increase in storage space at the rear of the vehicle (handy if you made some purchases at Pitti Uomo), plus a generous touchscreen for the driver makes navigation a breeze.

In short, Ford might just be on to a winning concept – and it seems that the company knows it. "Every passenger can enjoy the best seat in the house," said Ford Europe's vehicle line director, Pete Reyes, at the launch of the Tourneo Custom. "The vehicle has been transformed from top to bottom, combining the comfort and quality of a luxury car with outstanding space and practicality." It's a hype that the vehicle is living up to – and the reason why you'll be hoping that one picks you up from Peretola or Linate next time you're in town. — Ⓜ

TAXIS

Follow that cab

Global

Taxi services are integral to the identity of cities across the world, offering not only vital transport options but a distinct emblem for the community they operate in (*writes Perry Richardson*). When thinking of New York, the famous yellow cab springs immediately to mind. In London, the black cab is synonymous with the city's DNA. It's also big business in Europe: the continent's taxi market is expected to grow by 8.11 per cent between 2024 and 2029, with the sector set to be worth €104.6bn by the end of the decade. This presents enormous commercial opportunities for those supplying vehicles – and the Ford Tourneo Custom might just be edging out the competition.

For those European cities looking for a cab that can either entwine itself into an already established taxi fleet, or enhance its credentials, the Tourneo Custom can offer a fresh alternative, combining reliability, affordability and functionality. As the "custom" in its name suggests, almost every detail of the car can be tweaked, including its three powertrain options (diesel, hybrid or electric) flexible seating configurations and the possibility of adding ramps and electric side-steps. Custom-fitted grab rails and a two-way hearing loop intercom can also be added, plus its interior finishes and paint job can be readily changed to match the requirements of any city's taxi colourway.

Did Ford design the Tourneo Custom with the prime focus of it becoming a widely used taxi vehicle across Europe? No, but it was designed for tailored versatility, which makes it a prime candidate to become that globally accepted taxi vehicle. The challenge now lies in shifting perceptions away from the current limited saloon-style taxi options and encouraging taxi operators to consider the array of possibilities that a vehicle such as the Ford Tourneo Custom has to offer. — Ⓜ

Perry Richardson is the editor of 'TaxiPoint' (taxi-point.co.uk) and a taxi-industry specialist.

2

Business. *Global.*

Great and small

With demand for cleaner ways to zip across our cities rising, we round up the 10 best microcars showing that less is more.

WRITER Naomi Xu Elegant
ILLUSTRATION Sehee Chae

The minicar, the microvan, the nanocar – the tiny vehicles that have been cropping up on city roads across the globe have many names. Japan was among the first countries to recognise their virtues, establishing the *kei* category in 1949. Others have warmed to them too – most notably China, where surging domestic sales of the Wuling Hongguang Mini EV have seen it dethrone the Tesla Model 3 as the world's best-selling electric vehicle (EV).

With consumers increasingly prioritising energy efficiency, automakers are now offering vehicles that are conspicuously more diminutive than their fuel-guzzling counterparts. Advances in engineering and design have allowed newer microcars to pack more amenities and technology into their bijou frames. Meanwhile, government incentives for compact cars are becoming common, from subsidies in South Korea to preferential parking in Guernsey.

Almost every major automaker has entered the sector, responding to growing demand – particularly from young urbanites, among whom these compact vehicles have become status symbols. They make sense for urban life: they can zip down alleys and squeeze into tight parking spots, and are safer, quieter and less obtrusive than larger vehicles. But they're not limited to cities. Models such as the Suzuki Hustler and the Kia Ray are built for country drives, while specialedition models including Fiat's Topolino are perfect for cruising along the Italian Riviera. Here are 10 of the mightiest microcars on the market. — Ⓜ

1 Fiat Topolino

Italy

2.53 metres

Fiat's Topolino is a restyled version of the Citroën Ami. Like the original, it's a two-door, two-seater electric quadricycle, though drivers who want to feel the wind in their hair can choose the Dolce Vita edition, which has a doorless open carriage and a canvas roof. Its name is a nod to the original Fiat 500, which ceased production in 1955 and was widely known as "Topolino" (Mickey Mouse's Italian moniker). It comes in teal with cream interiors and has a top speed of 45km/h.

2 Microlino

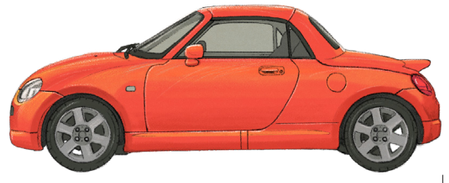
Switzerland & Italy

2.52 metres

Co-founders Merlin and Oliver Ouboter unveiled their Microlino concept at the Geneva International Motor Show in 2016. Four years later, a redesign resulted in the two-seat, four-wheel EV that's now produced in Turin. The Microlino can reach 90km/h, though it's so small that it's technically classified as a quadricycle. It has a sunroof and comes in various shades of pastel or primary colours, with a glossy or matte finish. Prices range from €16,500 to €23,000.

3 Daihatsu Copen

Japan

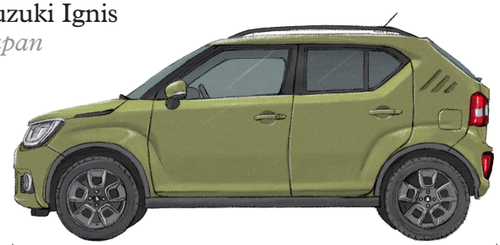


3.4 metres

The first generation of the Daihatsu Copen, launched in Japan in 1999, was a two-door roadster with a hard convertible top and bubbly curves suggestive of a children's toy. The model that's now in production is slightly more angular but retains the original's charm and has a top speed of about 170km/h. The Copen – the anglicised form of the Japanese word *kopen*, a portmanteau of *kei* and "open" – is a particularly fine example of the light automobile.

4 Suzuki Ignis

Japan



3.7 metres

The Suzuki Ignis is a rare beast: an SUV version of the dinky Japanese *kei*-class car. It's reliable and feels roomier than most micro-vehicles, with more than 500 litres of storage when the rear seatbacks are folded. But you won't buy one for haulage – its main draw is that it's fun to drive in the city. The 4×4 option is perfect for more rustic outings, while the new SZ-T version comes with roof rails, 16-inch alloy wheels and side mouldings that are guaranteed to turn heads.

5 Silence S04

Spain

2.28 metres

This two-door hatchback comes in two versions, the faster of which can reach 85km/h. The Silence S04 has the distinction of being one of the first EVs with a removable battery, making charging more convenient – drivers can plug in at home or subscribe to a service allowing them to swap dying batteries for fresh ones at designated stations. Spain's Silence produces the S04 at a former Nissan factory in Barcelona and Nissan is leading its distribution in Europe.

6 Tata Magic Iris

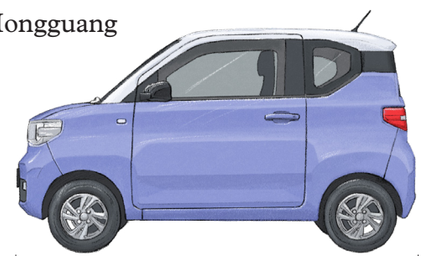
India

2.96 metres

The Magic Iris is a diesel-powered microvan produced by Tata Motors, one of India's largest carmakers. It has four seats, a front cab with two doors and a third rear door, and its top speed is 55km/h. It has diamond-shaped headlights and measures a little under three metres in length. It was designed with the domestic market in mind: it's a safer alternative to the rickshaws and tuk-tuks that are ubiquitous in the country's megacities.

7 Wuling Hongguang Mini EV

China



2.92 metres

The two-door, four-seater Wuling Hongguang Mini is the world's best-selling EV. It's also one of the cheapest, with the basic model priced at about €4,000. It was launched in 2020 by SGMW, a joint venture between SAIC Motor, Guangxi Auto and General Motors. The wallet-friendly price and a Pantone collaboration that resulted in a series offering three pastel-coloured options have made it especially popular among younger drivers. It can reach a speedy 100km/h too.

8 Kia Ray EV

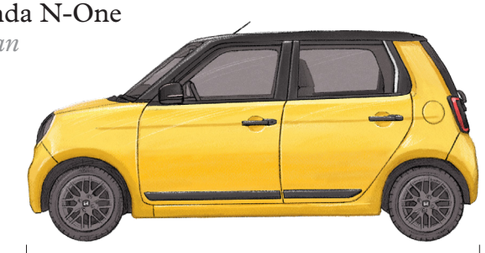
South Korea

3.6 metres

With its large windows and add-ons such as a side tarp that forms a shaded canopy, the Kia Ray will appeal to camping enthusiasts and day-tripping urbanites. In response to the growing demand for EVs in its domestic market, South Korea's Kia released a new electric edition of this popular compact car in 2023, having discontinued the first EV Ray in 2018. It comes in shades ranging from white to aqua and the interior can be outfitted in either grey or black.

9 Honda N-One

Japan

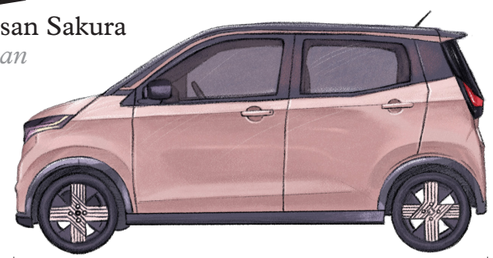


3.4 metres

On the outside, the second generation of Honda's N-One *kei* car is nearly indistinguishable from its predecessor. It has slightly deeper-set headlights, a larger grille and an additional strip of rear lights but most of the changes were reserved for the inside. These include enhanced safety features, extra storage space, USB ports and a sleeker dashboard. A special Style 1 Urban edition, launched in 2022, features two-tone leather seats and a faux-wood dashboard.

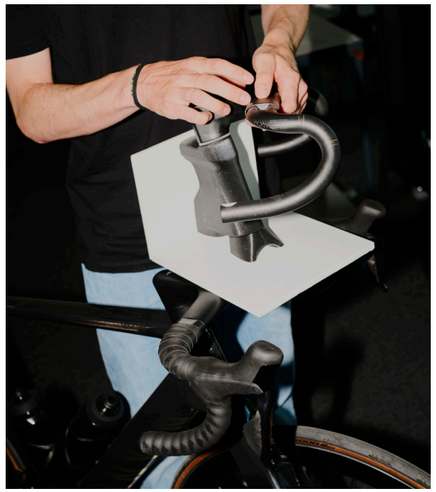
10 Nissan Sakura

Japan



3.4 metres

Released in 2022, Nissan's four-seater Sakura is Japan's best-selling EV. Nissan has decades of experience in the sector and pioneered the first mass-market EV but this is its first electric *kei* car. Though narrow, the Sakura's height allows for plenty of storage space, especially when the backseats are folded flat. It has an impressive top speed of 130km/h and comes in a range of colours, including pink, in honour of Japan's national flower, the cherry blossom.



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Business. *Germany.*

Riding high

We visit Canyon's state-of-the-art HQ to find a bicycle maker that is rapidly going through the gears.

WRITER Ed Stocker
PHOTOGRAPHY Anna Ziegler

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"This is a do-everything bike," says Arthur Janzen, Canyon's global category director for urban and recreation, suitably dressed for a ride in shorts and a T-shirt. "No matter where you go, the bike supports you." We're on a two-wheeled tour of the bike brand's global HQ in Koblenz. In the hills above us is German wine country and the sun is shining as we ride down a path next to the Rhine, testing the bike that Janzen is referring to, the Pathlite:On SUV, as well as the Roadlite:On CF. These are two of the latest e-bikes in this category.

Canyon, with its huge number of pedal and e-bikes – from road to mountain – on offer via its website, is clearly ambitious. It's determined to be at the forefront of a bicycle industry that's continuing to develop at almost the same lick as the automotive trade.

The Roadlite has wireless gear changing, lights integrated with its battery and a motor by

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Porsche-owned company Fazua. The Pathlite, a trekking bike with fat tyres, comes with the option of ABS (the anti-lock braking system pioneered by car designers) to stop from you going over the handlebars, as well as a belt-drive system that lets the rider change gears with a twist of the right handlebar rather than a click shift. Both offer graded levels of pedal assist – and cost several thousand euros.

The company's new HQ – a collection of box-shaped, black-and-white buildings comprising offices, a showroom and an e-bike centre – opened last year. When MONOCLE meets the company's CEO, Nicolas de Ros Wallace, he is sitting in a Vitra armchair in an office filled with high-performance bikes and cycling paraphernalia. De Ros Wallace, who has Spanish, Italian and British roots, is sporting one of the brand's black T-shirts and, though we're assured that dressing in company kit isn't compulsory, most people here are embracing the look. De Ros Wallace came onboard in 2021, after leadership roles at Zara and, most recently, Nike, where he oversaw the Jordan segment from the sportswear behemoth's European base in the Netherlands. He still commutes to Canyon from Utrecht.

1. Fourth-generation Aeroad CFR in Canyon's R&D department
2. New HQ in Koblenz
3. Bikes on display
4. Assembly line
5. Ready to ride
6. Test lab team manager Stefanie Schunck

De Ros Wallace says that urban bikes represent about 5 per cent of global sales, something that he wants to increase. "One of our strategic pillars is urban mobility," he says. "But it doesn't have to come by bringing down performance. It has to come by pulling up urban mobility." He is determined to bring a design-forward, technology-filled approach to city biking, an area that he thinks offers big opportunities for growth as metropolises reassess their transport infrastructure.

Canyon, which employs nearly 1,700 people worldwide, including at a hub in Amsterdam, isn't aiming to be the next Specialized or Giant Bicycles. In fact, being the biggest bike company in the world isn't part of its game plan. "Others play that role," says De Ros Wallace. "Our ambition is to be the most innovative and inspiring." The brand is banking on differentiation to stand out from the pack as it looks to tweak its catalogue. Part of the plan, being an e-commerce player, is striving to provide the best customer service and extending the ways in which consumers can interact with the brand. This has been done through investment in an app and a forthcoming membership scheme. Canyon's physical presence is also being extended with the growth of its Canyon Factory Service (CFS) centres – essentially repair workshops – that are currently operating in towns including Rotselaar in Belgium and Eindhoven in the Netherlands. Munich's CFS is slated to open in early 2025.

Founded as a bicycle retailer called Radsport Arnold in the 1990s by brothers Roman and Franc Arnold, the company moved into manufacturing and by 2002 had renamed itself Canyon. Franc is no longer involved, while Roman sold a majority stake to Belgium-based investor Groupe Bruxelles Lambert (GBL) in 2020, retaining equity in the company as well as chairmanship of the board. Despite its desire to push into cities, Canyon's brand DNA still draws on its sporty beginnings, with a focus on high performance, and there remains a strong link to athletes. This is something that MONOCLE sees while touring the showroom, where bikes used by cyclists including Dutch superstar Mathieu van der Poel are on display next to floor-to-ceiling windows. More than 50 riders were on Canyon bikes at the Paris Olympics and the company sponsors some 270 athletes, as well as having several high-profile ambassadors, including US basketball player LeBron James.

1. Electric bike showroom
2. Wheels in the factory
3. CEO Nicolas de Ros Wallace
4. All bikes need oil
5. Addressing minor scratches or blemishes
6. Colour chart
7. CT scanner used to assess potential issues with a frame

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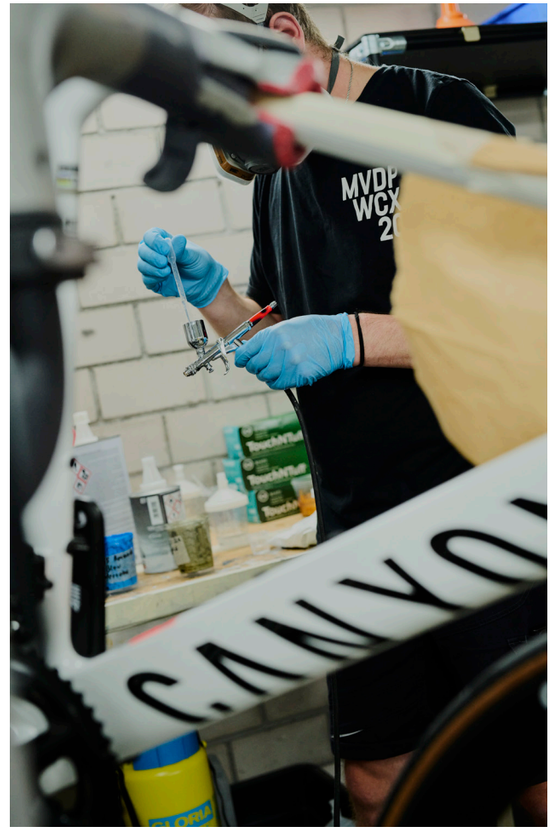
The link to sporting excellence is clearly aimed at making Canyon both inspirational and aspirational. "We build the best bikes for the pros but we also want to trickle down," says Sven Reutter, a Canyon product manager, as we visit the Innovation Lab, part of the brand's R&D centre, which features a soldering station and a set of small 3D printers.

The R&D is just one part of the Koblenz-based design and engineering machine. Canyon is keen to point out its state-of-the-art facilities, including a test lab where such things as frame stiffness are tested and gizmos including a 3D optical scanning arm are deployed to ensure that frames have been made correctly. There's also a destructive test lab – which sounds more fun than it looks – where Canyon ensures that new bikes can stand the test of time before going into production.

A short drive from the HQ, MONOCLE visits a big factory facility where the bulk of Canyon's higher-end bikes are assembled. Hundreds of parts are needed to put the bikes together and these come from around the world, from Portugal to Taiwan. The factory, where a flashing green light indicates that work is about to begin on a line of bikes awaiting stages such as gear wiring or motor attachment, can produce up to 400 bicycles a day before they are boxed and shipped. So are there any plans to manufacture outside Germany? "For us, local for local is the ideal: Europe for Europe; Asia for Asia; the US for the US," says De Ros Wallace. "It's the ideal but not the reality because much of the industry is in Taiwan." Still, there are plans to open a warehouse in Asia to make logistics more efficient.

Canyon hopes to forge ahead, despite the industry looking a lot flatter than it did during the pandemic, when everyone seemed to want to hop on two wheels and get fit. Sights are set on growing the current sales of €741m to more than €1bn by 2025, with plenty of opportunity to increase market share in the US, where the company has a southern Californian outpost, as well as southern Europe and Asia. Canyon is also aiming to extend its clothing line and move into accessories such as shoes and helmets. "We're investing heavily in talent," says De Ros Wallace, who owns five bikes – all of them Canyons, of course. "We are the right size to manoeuvre." — Ⓜ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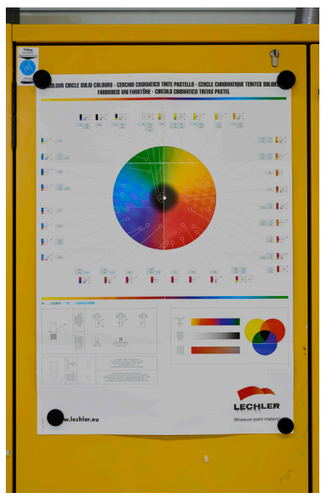
"For us, local for local is the ideal: Europe for Europe; Asia for Asia; the US for the US"



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Spoilt for choice
Customisation will be a key part of Canyon's future success. Customers will soon be able to pick out their bike's paint finishes, wheels and more.

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Business. *Zürich.*

Easy riders

Compact-cargo-bike company Flinc is doing the heavy lifting that's taking the Swiss cycle scene in a new direction.

WRITER Claudia Jacob
PHOTOGRAPHY Philip Frowein

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Markus Freitag's passion for pedals was first ignited in 1982 while watching Steven Spielberg's *ET.* Some 40 years later, the Zürich-born entrepreneur has created a Spielberg-inspired bicycle brand that's perfect for nipping around his hometown. Called Flinc, its namesake model is a svelte two-wheeler that is as compact as an urban mini-bike, as capacious as a cargo bike and as sturdy as ET's BMX. "Our niche is an easily manoeuvrable model with a simple but sophisticated luggage system," says Freitag.

In 1993, Markus and his brother, Daniel, launched Freitag, a brand that produces bags designed for cyclists, so launching a bike brand made complete sense. "Flinc is the bike I would love to have had on my doorstep all my life," says Freitag, who reinvested his profits from the bag brand to launch the bike in April.

Though the Danes had pioneered the cargo bike in the 1980s, today the "Made in Switzerland" label is a hallmark of quality cycling products across the globe. Yet Zürich has not fully realised its potential as a cycling city. "The streets are cramped due to the tram system and we lack cycle lanes that would allow bikes to play a supporting role in this urban context," says Freitag. The Flinc is a product of these surroundings, designed to comfortably navigate the narrow streets.

And Freitag's brand might just be onto something: record numbers of commuters here are ditching the car for the bike. Pro Velo, a network of regional bike associations, saw a 21 per cent increase in participants in its Cycle to Work campaign when compared to 2022. This uptick is reflected in industry growth. In 2024 the Swiss bike sector is predicted to be worth €720m, while Denmark's lags behind at €490m. "Bike ownership here has grown exponentially since the pandemic," says frame builder Wim Kolb, who constructed the first Flinc prototype in 2020. "In Zürich, residents are interested in zero-emission alternatives and have the disposable income to be able to invest in quality," he says. "The infrastructure needs to catch up to allow the cargo bike to flourish."

The Flinc – meaning "nimble" in Swiss-German – is made from a special steel alloy. The compact design weighs 16kg, about a third of the weight of the average cargo bike. "We have deliberately not reinvented the bicycle," says Freitag. Instead, high-quality, low-maintenance components were chosen, which complement a tried-and-trusted diamond-shaped frame. When MONOCLE takes the Flinc for a spin, the pedalling feels effortless thanks to the smooth tread of the 20-inch tyres created by German manufacturer Schwalbe. All of these factors, says Freitag, mean that it is not necessary to power the bike with electricity. "The Flinc was designed for Zürich's flat pavements."

But Flinc isn't just a brand; it's also about community. On Thursday evenings, cyclists convene at the company's HQ for a beer, a flick through its smart selection of cycling magazines and, should they choose, a test ride of the bike. Getting Zürich's residents in the saddle requires both infrastructure and curiosity – the Flinc has certainly set the wheels in motion. — Ⓜ

flinccycles.com

1. The Flinc team outside the firm's HQ
2. Flinc fanatic going for a spin