

MOTORING



CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

Guilherme Marques

FORD || The Ford Fiesta will bow out in June, leaving behind a legacy of 22 million units sold.

I borrowed the title for this text from one of Gabriel García Márquez's most famous novels. I read it when I was 15 and it is still one of my favourite books. No, it has nothing to do with cars, but those five words came to mind a few months ago and they haven't left me since.

Why? Because Ford announced they are going to kill the Fiesta in June this year. And no, they are not replacing it with a new model with a fancier name than 'party' in Spanish – the combustion-engine supermini with a Ford badge is gone for good.

That's because Ford want all their passenger vehicles to be 100% electric by 2030 and there would be no point in developing something new at this point. But, I dare ask, isn't it nonsensical to kill a car that is so deeply rooted in the market and that is as cheap to produce as it gets these days? I guess not.

The American constructor say they want to sell 600,000 electric vehicles in Europe in 2026 and that they will launch three new exciting pure electric cars in the European market in 2024 – thus justifying why they don't need as many fuel-powered

vehicles anymore. But if they are launching three new exciting electric cars, well, they are going to be pioneers because I have driven a lot of electric cars in the past four or five years and they are a lot of things, but exciting is not one of them.

Each day that passes I find it harder to believe this whole electric car thing is becoming a reality. Are we really that gullible? Do we 'buy' everything we see on TV? Are we actually too numb to think for ourselves? I look around and it sure seems that way.

Michael A. Singer is a journalist, software developer and a billionaire who has been accused of securities fraud. Let's forget about that last part, shall we? He is also a *New York Times* bestselling author who has written what must be the sentence that better defines the very essence of our western civilization as we know it today. He said: "There are two ways you can live: you can devote your life to staying in your comfort zone, or you can work on your freedom."

I'd say we are all just staying in our comfort zone. The electric cars we are being forced to buy are just a small



part of a much bigger picture and, looking at it, can you really blame Ford for this decision? I mean, this is a publicly listed company, it has to make money for its shareholders, so surely they are not trying to do what's worst for the company. If they are going electric, it's because they have to go electric. Because the business plan makes sense.

It's just that killing off a car as important in Europe as the Fiesta blatantly shows how ridiculous this whole thing is. A combustion-engine car is 60% cheaper to build than the equivalent battery-electric – so imagine how much that Fiesta replacement is going to have to cost. Anyway, I bet governments will throw in a few more subsidies for the green revolution and all will be okay.

This little rant of mine comes on the back of a few days driving around in the

Stop what you are doing and proceed to the nearest Ford dealership. The Fiesta will be gone in six months - time is of the essence.

small Ford. And what a great car it is. Truly one of the best superminis ever built. A car that is as practical, comfortable and reliable as buyers in this segment demand, but that offers a calm and smooth kind of driving pleasure – even with a tiny 1.0 engine. Oh – and it averages around 6 litres per 100/km. Amazing.

The Fiesta is proof we have gotten to peak combustion cars. A small car cannot get better than this. You can like its styling more, you can like it less; you can appreciate Ford as a brand, you may prefer a different badge up front – but no one can deny this is a tremendously well-engineered car that fully lives up to its promise. I will eat this newspaper in 2024 if the electric replacement is half as good. Half.

And even if I do have to eat this paper, how much will it cost? The Fiesta I drove

was a top-of-the-range ST Line version and you can take one home today for around €23,000. Entry-level versions cost as little as €18,000. A smaller, less practical, less comfortable, worse to drive, pure electric Fiat 500 is €24,000. A Peugeot e-208 is €32,000 and a Renault Zoe is €35,000.

And remember, although a definitive number is impossible to determine, a lot of studies say you have to drive an electric car for at least 70,000km to offset the carbon emissions the factory produced building it. Anyway, there are a myriad of studies you can read online on this matter. But the most important thing is: an electric vehicle is not a zero-emissions machine. It just doesn't produce CO2 when it's moving.

My conclusion is, therefore, quite simple: get a Fiesta while you can.



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