

MOTORING



AND THEN THERE WAS A SALOON

Guilherme Marques

TEST DRIVE || The DS9 has been around for almost a year, so it's time I checked it out.

DS have always wanted to do things differently. A new brand with the need to establish itself, it is built on the premise that the idea of French chic is so unique it can be materialised in a car that – sitting in the premium segment – is quite different from the traditional Germans.

For a young brand, the conundrum is: do we do what they do and try to beat them at their own game, or do we take a risk, do it differently, and see what happens? I am oversimplifying, of course – launching a new brand is a multi-million-euro enterprise and no one can just 'risk it', but you see what I mean.

For DS, it was clear the Germans could not be beaten at their own game. Many had tried and many had failed – including household names, let alone a new player. So, being different is at the very core of these French machines that were born out of a small line of cars within the Citroën range.

If you look at DS models, they do seem to go about their business quite in a peculiar manner. And although the engineering – chassis, engines, gearboxes – is shared with Peugeot and Citroën, there is something

unique about a DS that validates the concept. It's that French chic thing. Hard to explain in words, but look at one or, even better, sit in one, and you get it.

The DS3 is a fine-looking thing. The DS4 just as well. And, to me, they could not be an Audi or a BMW – they have their own personality and I really like that.

The DS7 is a bit more generic, in that there are cars out there that, overall, have the same proportions and visual presence (blame the avalanche of SUVs that seems never-ending), so what about the DS9?

It's very hard to do a fresh-looking three-box car. Think about it. The current BMW 3-Series is an evolution of the last generation, which, in turn, was an evolution of the generation that came before. Same thing happens with the Mercedes C-Class and the Audi A4.

The DS9 comes out of nowhere. No predecessor to evolve from, no place to start, but a blank canvas and that French chic idea. So, is it revolutionary? No. Is it a world apart – aesthetically – from the Germans? Also no. And that tells us a lot about this car, but mainly, it tells



225 horse-power through an 8-speed transmission and offering 56 km of pure electric range. It's super comfortable, rides very well and the interior has that chicness I have been talking about without neglecting quality, class and ergonomics. It's not a sporty car – nor should it be. It's an executive saloon, a car one hopes will bring refinement to every journey, not sportiness. The DS9 does that.

It also comes with all the gadgets you can imagine, as well as a myriad of safety features to assure buyers of DS's commitment to making their cars as safe as possible. Use the electric range wisely and you can get under 6 litres as average for every 100km. Use it to the maximum and DS say 1.5/100km litres is possible.

DS know and I know they won't sell the DS9 in Europe anywhere near the numbers the Germans make. But they already knew that when they decided to build it. This car shows this brand is getting more and more confident in its abilities and can go head-to-head in many segments with the best.

Bearing in mind it costs €62,000, I would really like you to try one and see if you agree with me on it being quite different from the likes of Audi, BMW or Mercedes. Even if you don't buy it, I bet you will enjoy the whole DS experience and, who knows, you might consider one in the future.

I say this because every DS owner I know loves his car. And I, a confessed petrolhead, simply love the idea of someone loving their car.

us a lot about the segment it belongs to.

DS is building this car because it wants to be a global player. It is a symbol of the most advanced technology available to the brand and, crucially, it is the first DS model to be produced in China for global markets. China is not a mature car

market like the European or American markets, so a luxury saloon must follow more traditional market 'rules', which explains why the 9 is not as visually groundbreaking as the 3 or the 4.

However, to my eye, it still looks nothing like a German saloon, so job well done there.

I drove the DS9 for a whole day, racking up 400km of all kinds of roads, and it did not put a foot wrong. The more I used it, the more I liked all the things that make it different from, for example, my BMW.

The DS9 E-Tense 225 I drove was a front-wheel drive petrol-hybrid putting out



'The DS9 saloon is a very welcome addition to the French constructor's range, which comprised up until now of two crossovers and an SUV'

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