

Motoring



Landwind a Chinese beauty

NOT HOT AIR: HEAD-TURNING LANDBREEZE SUV LOOKS A STEAL AT LESS THAN R300 000

➔ **Big and spacious with all the modern conveniences.**

Eric Naki

The Chinese motor industry is slowly making serious inroads into the South African car market and the latest entry, Landwind 5 SUV from the JMC stable is likely to go far.

Since the Western and Japanese models have dominated our mindsets for generations, we tend to be sceptical about

anything emerging from the East – as we did when the Koreans first introduced their cars and cell-phones to our shores.

We were shocked to the core when their various Samsung electronic goods, and Kia and Hyundai vehicles took our domestic market by storm.

We were further awed when China brought us their popular Huawei smartphone that kicked many brands off the top spot.

Now the Chinese cars. By design and speed, the 5, as it is popularly known, is threatening the existing SUVs of its size and with its internal convenience features,

because many, like myself, fell in love with this vehicle.

From a little distance, you could mistake it for other brands.

I saw a small version of the Hyundai iX35 but my son was quick to correct me, likening it to a Lexus.

I let him off because he usually wins the debate when it comes to cars. He has an eye for a beautiful car.

That speaks to the Landwind's packaged beauty and luxury, laced with cheaper price.

It is, indeed, a head-turner.

I say this because when I review anything, whether it's a book or theatre, the voice of the people

counts the most. I prefer to let the audience, or the buyer, speak.

During my week-long test-drive of the Landwind automatic, people in my neighbourhood did not stop talking about its beauty and spaciousness.

But none was sure where it's made, and when I responded: "It's made in China", a few exclaimed: "Is that so?"

They seemed to expect something smaller as, seemingly, the Chinese are known for smaller things.

I took it on a 160km return trip between Johannesburg and the gold-mining town of Carltonville to make a surprise visit to relatives at Wedela township.

The N12 road was open and allowed for speed and cruising, which was what I was looking for.

I was satisfied after reaching 140km/h within no time. I could have done more but I'm never comfortable going beyond that speed in any car – even that jump beyond 120km/h was for the sake of testing the car's strength.

It's easy to drive. It's soft and allowed for any manoeuvre. I never got the impression it would run out of steam at 140km/h, even climbing a hill.

I enjoy a car that stays

steady on the road because I have driven vehicles that tend to become a bit wobbly at speed. But there was none of that with the 5.

Influenced by my son, I visited the 2018 (Africa) China Commodities And Equipment Manufacturing Industry Expo at the Old Highgate Mall, just west of Johannesburg, at the weekend, where I saw various Chinese cars.

Their common feature was being "mini size" – whether it's a sedan or bakkie. I felt the Landwind, which was not on display at the expo, was the boss.

The 5 is big and spacious inside with a gigantic boot space (855 litres). Nothing is crammed.

During the Carltonville trip, my daughter operated the state-of-the-art interactive Touch Screen and was impressed. But the UBS cable that protruded through the cubby hole was ugly and appeared lost there. It looked like it was squeezed-in as an after-thought by the manufacturer.

The reverse sensor and rear-view camera were attractive and the packaged press-button sun-roof and steering wheel audio buttons makes the Landwind a car of both luxury and convenience.

I wasn't sure if the seats were genuine leather, but the material was impressive. Save for the USB issue, I found no substantial fault.

At R282 880 commercial price in July, it's cheap. It comes standard with a five-year/100 000km service plan and a three-year/100 000km warranty.

You could mistake it for other brands

