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(Information Resource Centre)

# FIRST LOOK

This month's new cars

# XC90 heralds new Volvo's ambitions

87-year-old Volvo Cars is reborn. What is powering the Swedish brand's charge into the future?

In 2010, Volvo Cars pulled back from the brink of a collapse as China's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group stepped in and acquired the renowned Swedish company. Soon after, Geely set the ball rolling to rebuild Volvo Cars into a dominant luxury car manufacturer on the world stage. The long process started with an infusion of funds for research and development to build a product pipeline, the first of which has now been revealed — the XC90. One key reason to build new platforms was to eliminate any dependence on the previous parent, the Ford Motor Company. However, this decision put Volvo's top-of-the-line SUV, the XC90, in a tough spot, as the ageing product would have to fend off spanking new competition for a few years

longer, taking its lifespan to almost 12 years! Over the last four years, Volvo has made brave choices as they built all-new platforms and new engine families to power these platforms. When it hits roads next year, the recently unveiled XC90 will be the first taste of the new Volvo.

#### PLATFORM PLAY

Volvo's first building block is the Scalable Platform Architecture, SPA, as it is called, is earmarked for the larger and more premium products in the stable, and so it underpins

the impressively large XC90. This all-new platform makes extensive use of ultra high-strength boron steel, which seems a bit unimpressive when you consider that all other manufacturers in the segment are moving to lighter all-aluminium platforms. By weight, 40 percent of the XC90 is hot-formed ultra high-strength steel,

and achieving this required new engineering and manufacturing processes. However, it has helped the XC90 boost stiffness and strength while slashing kerb weight. Volvo claims the new SUV is 125kg lighter than the outgoing car and nearly 200kg lighter than rivals.

No doubt, the use of steel will have



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Luxurious cabin has soothing Scandinavian design, and cutting edge connectivity. Touchscreen system supports Apple's CarPlay and Android Auto.

helped Volvo shorten the XC90's and the upcoming S90's time-to-market while improving cost competitiveness, a vital aspect in the company's revival.

Volvo has also developed a second platform, the CMA or Compact Modular Architecture, which will underpin future C and B segment models — the first of which is likely

to be the all-new S60 in 2016, and the XC60 later on.

#### ENGINES OF THE FUTURE

The other ace in Volvo's arsenal is its new family of all-aluminium four-cylinder diesel and petrol engines that fall under the Drive-E umbrella. While most luxury manufacturers are offering four-cylinder engines as variants on their flagship offerings, Volvo has committed completely to the four-pot architecture. By combining the 2.0-litre engines with turbo charging, supercharging, turbo and supercharging and electric drive, Volvo has created a wide range of power outputs to choose from, while delivering low emissions. The top-of-the-line eDrive 'Twin-Engine' will be badged a T8 on the XC90, the plug-in hybrid combining 80bhp of electric power with the turbo and supercharged petrol motor for a solid 400bhp. Volvo claims the torque and the smoothness of this combination will invalidate any argument for a V8 engine. It also offers 40km of electric-only driving.

Volvo is also developing a range of 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol and diesel engines. These engines will power the CMA range of cars.

#### SETTING THE STAGE

The XC90, the "first new car from a new Volvo Car company" as it was called at its unveil, will be the world's and India's first taste of things to come from Sweden. Thomas Ingenlath, formerly of the Volkswagen Group, has scripted the new design language. Irrespective of which of the three designs you choose the large grille with, it will wear a more prominent Volvo iron mark badge. The highlight of the XC90 is the new headlamp

design that has LED DRLs in the shape of Thor's hammer embedded in them. These design highlights will be stamped on future Volvo models as well.

Other than these elements, the XC90 is a neat and uncluttered design. A sense of safety and security, of being cocooned, has been a Volvo hallmark, and the XC90 keeps that tradition going. The flat and low design of the hood emphasises robustness, as does the strong shoulder line. Simple and timeless Scandinavian design is prominently displayed at the rear. The waterfall design tail-lamps start in a trickle, but flare out over the haunches. The horizontal lines on the tailgate further emphasise the width of the car.

The highlight for Indian buyers is sure to be the XC90's distinctive design and beautifully finished cabin. Details such as the crystal glass gear lever and the diamond-cut finish for some controls show the

extent that Volvo has gone to give its big SUV a more premium feel. A technological highlight is the large iPad-like touchscreen on the centre console. Through the touchscreen and voice commands, the driver can control infotainment, car menus, navigation and telephony. As is expected with all Volvos, safety is given added weightage, with three new technologies debuting on the XC90. One of them, the run-off road detection system, detects when a vehicle has driven off the road and increases seatbelt tension to restrain passengers better. The second feature allows the XC90 to apply the brakes to avoid a collision with an oncoming vehicle, as is often the case at intersections. The third feature is a passive system for the front seats — the seat base has a crushable metal link that compresses downwards to absorb vertical force that would otherwise be transmitted to the occupant's spine. →



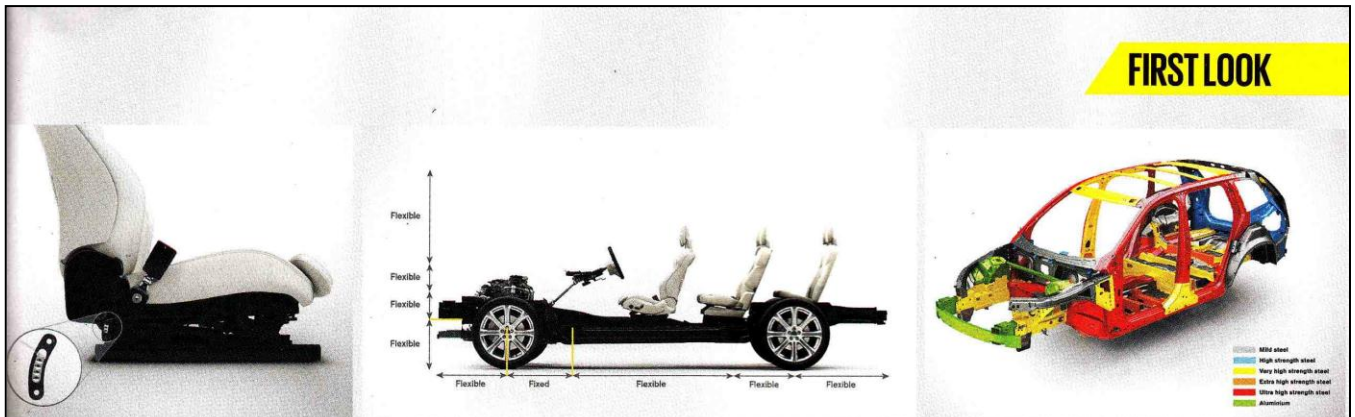
New cluster works well with centre console; diamond-cut engine start-stop switch.

From the crystal glass gear lever to the LED DRLs, the XC90 looks quite dressy.

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Safety seat absorbs vertical force; a range of cars can be built on the SPA platform; chassis is predominantly made of various grades of steel.

← When the going is good, the XC90 is a joy to be in as the chauffeur-driven can bask in the comfort and space offered in the second row of seats. However, the third row is best suited for occupants under 5-feet-6-inches tall. How much the last bit will affect buying decisions, though, remains to be seen.

On the engine front, the Indian market will receive the 2.0-litre, four-cylinder diesel engine developing 225bhp and 48kgm torque, both figures better than the outgoing XC90's 2.4-litre, five-cylinder diesel. The new XC90 is also said to be more efficient than the model it replaces, thanks in part to its use of an eight-speed gearbox. India-bound XC90s will come with an all-wheel-drive system, though front-wheel-drive XC90s are likely to be a part of the range internationally. India will not get any petrol engines either, at least not initially.

The first 200 units for India will be in top-spec guise (available in two-three colours), though more variants at a lower price will be offered later on. The XC90 is expected to be unveiled in India in the first quarter of 2015. Despite plans to bring the XC90 in as a CBU, Volvo expects the pricing to be quite aggressive. Prices are likely to be in line with Audi's Q7, which suggests an ex-showroom price tag in the region of Rs 65-70 lakh. Deliveries though will commence only in July-August 2015.

#### FUTURE CARS

The SPA platform is one of the key weapons in Volvo's charge back to the main stage as it will also underpin the next flagship sedan from Volvo, the S90. It will replace and supersede the S80, and is expected to boast of a revolutionary new

design with a sleek, low stance that is inspired from the Concept Coupe. It will also get a sumptuous and hi-tech cabin as we have seen in the XC90. Volvo is hoping that the XC90 and the S90 will revitalise the brand in the Indian market before the next flurry of launches.

Also, in 2016, Volvo is expected to reveal the new S60, which will be built on the new CMA platform that will be shared with its Chinese parent company, Geely. The S60 will boast of the new family of three-cylinder diesel and petrol engines. Expect the

Twin-engine hybrid powertrain offers 400bhp and AWD capability while emitting only 60g/km of CO2 in NEDC cycle.



S60 to come to India by late 2016 or early 2017.

In the near term, Volvo is mulling the launch of the V60 in India. The estate version of the S60 sedan is a stylish package that could easily pass off as a large hatch. The V60 differs from the S60 from the C-pillar onwards, and betters its rather paltry 380 litres of boot space by just 50 litres. However, if you drop the seats, you get a lot more practicality and storage. In-cabin space is ample and the quality is as sumptuous as seen in Volvos today. As the V60 shares its underpinnings with the already homologated S60, it can be quickly introduced into the Indian market. The jury, though, is out on whether Indian customers will nibble at the more practical yet stylish V60.

Meanwhile, in 2015, Volvo is all set to boost awareness of the Volvo brand in India, as it aims to sell over 500 units of the XC90 through its existing 13-strong dealership network. It looks like the Scandinavian brand has its foot firmly on the gas.

**KARTIKEYA SINGHEE**

#### VOLVO XC90 D5 AWD

<b>Price</b>	Rs 65 -70 lakh (estimated)
<b>L/W/H</b>	4950/2140/1775mm
<b>Motor</b>	4-cylinder, turbocharged diesel
<b>Engine layout</b>	Front, transverse, AWD
<b>Power</b>	225bhp at 4250rpm
<b>Torque</b>	48kgm at 1750-2500rpm