

Big & bland: I don't like their Latitude

FORGIVE me if I'm not raving about Renault's new Latitude. As big cars go, it's pretty bland and unexciting, and reminds me of the less-than-sexy Safrane. We're too sophisticated in Europe to take the Latitude seriously, but it may be just the ticket for the less discriminating Asian and Russian markets. Mind you, it does have a dual-mode air ioniser with double fragrance diffuser ...



KYLIE'S HOT SEAT

HERE'S an affordable chunk of pop memorabilia. Next month Bonhams will be knocking down a 1999 Mercedes SLK230, owned by Dannii and Kylie Minogue. Direct from the Minogue family, it's only done 19,000 miles and has an estimate of £8k-£12k. That's a five grand premium over a normal SLK, not a lot to sit in the same seat as two of the world's most beautiful bottoms. More on 0207 4477447.

Quentin



GP Peter Tracy's wife wants a white Audi A3 Cabriolet, but can't decide whether to buy petrol or diesel. She'll be paying cash, and wants to know whether she should go to an Audi dealer near her Porthcawl home or buy on the internet.

QUENTIN SAYS: Lucky her. The A3 cab is a cracking little car, and white

is the fave hue. I'd go for the diesel, because the resale will be stronger, but she shouldn't expect a discount. They're hot property at the moment, and Audi sell every one they can make. If it was me, I'd buy from an Audi dealer that's close, so if there are any problems, you're covered.



BIT ON

BM BEAUTY FOR

FOR the first time in 12 months, the used market is starting to creak.

I've been telling you the job has been on a roll since last summer, but over the last few weeks values have stalled.

Some dealers are so worried that they're telling the trade price guides to knock a blanket 10 per cent off everything, just to keep pace with the falling market.

One auctioneer said he's seen cars re-entered two and three times before they eventually sell at a reduced reserve. And this isn't a seasonal readjustment - it's the grim sign, reflected in almost every industry, that we could be looking down the barrel of a W-shaped recession.

Demand has slowed and supply has increased, but, more crucially, people aren't feeling as optimistic as they were.

Dealers tell me that punters are complaining about cash flow, and there are plenty of desperate sellers around. This week I was offered a V-plate BMW 320i SE with 60k for £1,700, a 51-plate Jaguar X-Type V6 with 35k for £2,100 and a Y-plate BMW X5 3.0d, with a modest 65k miles, for just £5,900.

Most startling price of the week was an ex-company 02-plate Vauxhall Omega CDX with a mere 50,000 miles for £1,200.

But things will get even cheaper. If you're in the market for a replacement motor, wait until September. In the used car game, timing is everything.

WHO'D DRIVE IT
Shrewd and sensible types



Whole lotta Jag for £2,100

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MONSTER MONEY

FOR £100k you get the lowest-mileage De Tomaso Pantera in the world. This white '74 monster is on US eBay with a genuine mileage of 135 from new, which is less than four miles a year. It's showroom fresh and fully serviced, and the Californian seller hopes to cash in on the recent classic supercar boom. Trouble is, for a hundred large you could buy a brand new Porsche 911 GT3, Merc SL63AMG, Audi R8, BMW M6 or Jag XKR with a big lump of change. You pays your money ...



Q I'm torn between a BMW Z4, Focus ST or Golf R32. I've got £15k. Which would you buy? Dave, email

A THE classiest option would be the R32. It's wonderfully understated, devilishly quick and rarer than the Focus or BM. Values have held up very well, but your £15k should buy you a 57-plater with 30k. Make sure it has VW warranty and dealer history.

Q MY father has a 1915 Model T Ford, with the registration BW 1060. Can you give me some idea of the plate's value? M Scarsbrook, email

A WHAT a lovely old Ford. Robbing it of its plate would be sacrilege. BW 1060 is probably worth about £2,500, but separating the Model T (worth £15k) from its original mark would devalue it by more.



DOWN THE SLIDE

200mph Porsche that's one in the eye for style



SOME lilies you just can't gild. And the Porsche Panamera is definitely one of them. Undaunted, tuning firm Mansory have just unveiled their Panamera Turbo.

In disco UV blue, it's got a carbon-fibre bonnet and diffuser, new front and rear spoilers and remapped ecu, giving a top shout of 203mph. The German modders have also come up with the most retina-searing interior ever, in crushed budgerigar yellow and varicose vein blue. GBH of the optic nerve, all of it.

Mad and bad, but it doesn't bend



ANOTHER week, another insane supercar. Launched, fittingly, at Le Mans, the Panoz Abruzzi Spirit of Le Mans kicks out 590 horses, with a dent-resistant shatter-proof body which uses the rather clumsily titled Recyclable Energy-Absorbing Matrix System. Expect a mid- or front-mounted V8 or V12 and a sticker price of around £325,000. If Panoz can find 81 buyers, each will also get the chance to drive a parade lap at the Le Mans 24 Hours event.

The bigger Swift will grow on you



FEW may wake up in the morning with the burning desire to buy a Suzuki Swift, but the latest incarnation does look handsome, well-built and well-warranted. It's lighter, longer and more roomy, and there's a new 1.2 petrol engine that's good for 56mpg, or a 1.3 oil-burner that can crack nearly 70. Expect prices to kick off at around £11,000.

£1.7k AS USED PRICES TUMBLE



320i SE with 60k for less than two grand!

VI25 GMO



Big-spec low-mileage 24v Omega for just £1,200



Early X5s down to six grand