

MOTORING *life*

At a casual glance, the MG S5 does not scream for attention
ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM



S5's appeal is beyond skin-deep

MG S5 EV LUXURY

PRICE \$192,888 with COE before rebates
MOTOR Permanent magnet synchronous powered by 62kWh lithium-ion phosphate battery
TRANSMISSION Single-speed, rear-wheel drive
POWER 99kW
TORQUE 250Nm
0-100KM/H 9.9 seconds
TOP SPEED 170km/h
POWER CONSUMPTION 17.1kWh/100km
CHARGING CAPACITY 150kW DC; 6.6kW AC
AGENT Eurokars EV
RATING ★★★☆☆

The electric SUV by MG drives well and has an interior that is well thought out

Lee Nian Tjoe

The compact sport utility vehicle (SUV) class is the key battleground where car brands slug it out for market dominance.

Spacious, well-equipped and a refreshingly engaging drive, the MG S5 may be just what the Chinese-owned brand needs to make a mark in an increasingly congested segment.

But this market segment is so crowded that it may be hard to pick out the S5 from its rivals. The palm-size MG emblem aside, the car's

front looks like many other SUVs, with its slit-like headlights and grille-less nose.

But look a little closer, and the quality of the design shines through, with details such as how the cabin seems to be set more rearwards than is typical for such vehicles. The bonnet is rather sculpted, rising at the edges near the fenders. Together with the soft curves and flowing creases on the flanks, the car looks sophisticated.

The classy design could be attributed to MG's roots as an English brand founded more than a century ago, but I am not sure how much of the S5's looks can be linked to the 1924 open-top car with big metal wings and running boards, or the two-door MGB sports car from the 1960s.

Neither can I spot any resemblance to the final version of the mid-engine MG TF roadster I reviewed in the early 2000s.

What is obvious is how the new car looks more polished than models like the MG5, which has been used as a taxi here since 2021, and the ZS SUV that was facelifted in 2024.

Like so many cars these days, a sizeable infotainment screen takes centre stage in the cabin. However, the set-up in the S5 is user-friendly, augmented by physical controls for features such as temperature and volume settings.

The menu structure is intuitive. Pairing smartphones, whether Apple or Android, can be done wirelessly or with a cable, which is not always a given.

The usability of the digital interface is especially important, as the S5 offers more features than earlier MGs. These include apps to tell the weather and stream music from Spotify. There are also YouTube and TikTok, which can be launched only when the car is not moving.

Being connected to the web also means it is possible to use the MG app to locate and unlock the car remotely, or find out the battery's state of charge, among other features.

The interior is usefully spacious, especially in the rear quarters. The bench is wide enough to accommo-

date three adults with sufficient headroom. The boot is sizeable with an adjustable floor board that minimises the ledge from the loading edge.

As with the majority of class rivals in Singapore, which include the BYD Atto 3, Aion V, Omoda E5 and Citroen e-C4, the S5 comes exclusively as a single-motor electric vehicle (EV).

In the MG's case, maximum power is capped at 99kW, which is identical to the version sold in places like Nepal. This qualifies the S5 in the category of certificate of entitlement (COE) for less-powerful cars and EVs.

The S5 has no trouble keeping up or pulling ahead of traffic. However, when starting off on a slope, it seems to need a firmer shove on the pedal before the car will inch ahead. This seems to be down to the calibration of the system rather than any real weakness.

The chassis feels very responsive to the driver's inputs, whether it is through the steering or the foot pedals. Like the MG 4 electric hatchback launched earlier, the S5 is a rarity among mass-market EVs as it is fun and feels fluid to drive.

The MG has a one-pedal driving



(Above) The cabin looks and feels robust, with a well-thought-out digital user interface.



(Left) The rear bench is usefully wide and there is enough legroom for passengers to stretch a little.

mode, where the S5 will decelerate pronouncedly when the accelerator pedal is eased, all the way to a complete halt, much like Tesla, or a golf cart. With practice, it is possible to drive all day without touching the brake pedal.

For those who prefer to use both pedals, it is possible to adjust the amount of energy recuperation or "engine braking", but only via the touchscreen. A shift paddle or a physical toggle switch would be handier.

The S5 is quite energy-efficient. Over 287km, the test car posts an average energy consumption of 14.4kWh/100km, which is impressive and well below the claimed figure.

A drive in any modern car is probably incomplete without quibbling over the warning sounds from the assistance systems. The MG has the whole arsenal of assistance systems that get active when the car is started. The system will chime for transgressions ranging from the driver not paying 10 per cent attention on the road to the car edging out of the lane or going 1kmh above the speed limit.

Not all of them are unreasonable, of course. But there are times when it makes sense to ease off some nannying, like when driving past a stretch of road works.

The solution comes in the form of a single button that stores the preferred setting for the various assistance systems. The hotkey can be conveniently called up with a single swipe of the touchscreen. While this feature is not unique to MG, it is nonetheless very useful and well-executed here.

What MG has done with the S5 shows just how quickly Chinese companies move and improve. So, beyond the attractive price tag – it goes for as low as \$169,888 with COE and rebates – there is much to like about the SUV.

niantjoel@sph.com.sg

COMPARABLE CONSIDERATIONS

BYD Atto 3 (\$235,388 with COE before rebates)

The BYD Atto 3 is a familiar sight on the roads here, as it has been around since 2022. There is no denying how the Chinese brand has got it right with the SUV. It is sufficiently spacious with more than enough tech, and the deal is further sweetened by generous discounts. The published price list suggests that the car can be had for as little as \$160,388 with COE, albeit subject to conditions.

Aion V (\$255,988 with COE before rebates)

The Aion V offers features nobody knew he or she needed in a car, from a chiller to a retractable

table for the rear passenger. It is also capable of the highest DC charging speed (180kW) and has an operating range of up to 485km. After rebates and conditions, the car can be had for \$169,988 with COE.

Honda HR-V 1.5L DX (\$175,999 with COE before rebates)

Such is the state of the car market that the Honda HR-V is an odd-ball choice today, coming from a non-Chinese brand and not being an EV. There is a hybrid version which is a Category B COE model and costs \$30,000 more. The non-hybrid model listed, after discounts and conditions, goes for \$166,999 with COE.

Hungry?

The Straits Times' **Food In The Hood** guide dishes out the latest eats

THE STRAITS TIMES str.sg/viz-stfood