

# Cars.co.za Awards: The competition heats up

## MOTORING STAFF

WE POPPED into Gerotek on the outskirts of Pretoria a couple of weeks ago to catch up with the Cars.co.za team, to see exactly what paces they were putting this year's Cars Awards finalists through in the build up to announcing the competition's winners in a couple of months time.

The Cars.co.za annual awards has become a mainstay in the local automotive sector, heralded for its slightly different approach to judging the best cars on sale in South Africa. Unlike competitions such as the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists Car of the Year, where professional, full-time motoring authors serve as jury members, the Cars Awards casts its net wider, encompassing full-time motoring media professionals, mainstream news and current affairs journalists from radio and TV, and social media content creators.

This year's 39 finalist vehicles included some firm favourites that have been doing battle for a few years already, to newcomers that have just been launched in Mzansi.

### THE 2020/2021 CARS AWARDS

Now in its sixth iteration, the Cars Awards aims to recognise the best purchasing propositions in 13 respective segments of the domestic new-vehicle market.

The theme for this year's awards programme is "Be Part of the Journey - My Car, My Freedom".

"As South Africa's leader in vehicle and asset finance, it is important to us to align our brand with impactful



Testing the new Land Rover Defender. | Roarke Bouffe



The Suzuki S-Presso separates the Toyota Starlet and Suzuki Baleno.



In the hot hatch category, the Honda Civic Type R, Hyundai i30 N and the VW GTI TCR.

industry initiatives, particularly those that add value to consumers. There are many aspects to consider when making a major budget-impacting decision such as buying a car. As such, consumers should have access to credible

opinions and objective data, on the models of cars and features available in the market, to assist them in making an informed purchasing decision," says Ghana Msibi, chief executive of WesBank Motor Division.

"Our successful partnership with Cars.co.za in powering the Cars Awards is now in its sixth year. It seems fitting that this year's awards theme is 'My Car, My Freedom'.

"After the months of lockdown and restrictions to movement we have all had to endure, being able to get behind the wheel and drive across our country's roads and highways is certainly a sense of freedom.

"However, if you are still deciding which car is right for you and your needs, the 2020/2021 Cars Consumer Awards category finalists and eventual winners should go a long way in guiding you to that decision."

### CHANGING MARKETPLACE

This year's 13 category winners will be selected from a list of 39 vehicles, which includes model derivatives from no fewer than 19 brands represented in the South African market.

All vehicles available on the South

African market on October 1, 2020, were eligible.

The 39 finalists were selected by the extended Cars.co.za editorial team; each member scored the 65 pre-selected semi-finalists individually based on the "Filters of Eligibility" and the "Pillars of Success" of the 13 respective categories. Once the scores were tallied, three finalists remained in each of the segments.

Compared with the preceding Cars Awards, Performance Car and Fun Hatch have been replaced with new and more relevant categories: Entry-Level and Premium Crossover. Nonetheless, as many as 10 of the previous programme's category winners have made the list of finalists again, although only four of them with exactly the same derivative as in

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# Who will be the eventual category winners?

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2019/20: Volkswagen Polo, Mazda CX-5, as well as BMW X3 and X5 respectively.

"We made some revisions to the categories to make sure that they are in line with what South Africans are shopping for in the new vehicle market, but also factored in which segments had seen significant activity in terms of new launches," says Cars.co.za consumer experience manager Hannes Oosthuizen. "We also consider pricing movements, to make sure that our categories remain relevant to the consumer."

Whereas the 2019/20 Cars Awards Brand of the Year, Volkswagen, had the most semi-finalists (7), followed by Suzuki (6) and Toyota (5), the Japanese marques, both of which have won the Brand of the Year title on two previous occasions, lead the list of finalists with five contenders apiece – the Wolfsburg-based firm has four, followed by BMW and Volvo with three each. Citroën, Honda, Isuzu, Land Rover and Subaru, which weren't represented in the decisive round of the programme last year, each have at least one finalist in 2020/21.

**The full list of 2020/2021 Cars Awards finalists**

**ENTRY LEVEL**

Hyundai Atos T1 Motion  
Suzuki S-Presso 1.0 S-Edition  
Suzuki Swift 1.2 GL

**BUDGET CAR**

Suzuki Baleno 1.4 GLX  
Suzuki Ignis 1.2 GLX  
Toyota Starlet 1.4 XR



Volvo in full force.

**COMPACT HATCH**

Ford Fiesta 1.0T Trend auto  
Suzuki Swift 1.4T Sport auto  
Volkswagen Polo 1.0 TSI Comfortline auto

**FAMILY CAR**

Kia Seltos 1.5 CRDI EX+  
Renault Duster 1.5 dCi Prestige  
Volkswagen T-Cross 1.5 TSI 110kW R-Line  
**FAMILY CAR**  
Citroën C5 Aircross 1.6T Shine  
Mazda CX-5 2.0 Dynamic auto  
Toyota RAV4 2.0 AWD GX R

**ADVENTURE SUV**

Ford Everest 2.0 Bi-Turbo 4WD XLT  
Isuzu M-LUX 3.0 4WD  
Toyota Fortuner 2.8 GD-6 4x4 VX Auto

**EXECUTIVE SUV**

BMW X3 xDrive20d M-Sport  
Range Rover Evoque P250 R-Dynamic SE  
Volvo XC60 D5 R-Design

**PREMIUM SUV**

BMW X5 xDrive30d M Sport

**LAND ROVER DEFENDER D240 HSE**

Volvo XC90 T8 Twin-Engine R-Design

**CROSSOVER**

Mazda CX-3 2.0 Individual Plus  
Subaru XV 2.0i-S ES  
Toyota C-HR 1.2T Luxury

**PREMIUM CROSSOVER**

Audi Q3 Sportback 40 TFSI quattro S Line  
Mini Countryman Cooper S  
Volvo XC40 T5 AWD R-Design

**HOT HATCH**

Honda Civic Type R  
Hyundai i30 N

**LEISURE DOUBLE-CAB**

Ford Ranger 2.0 Bi-Turbo 4x4 Wildtrak  
Toyota Hilux 2.8 GD-6 4x4 Legend Auto  
Volkswagen Amarok 2.0 BITDI Highline Plus 4Motion

**SPORT EXECUTIVE**

Audi A4 40 TFSI Sport S Line  
BMW 330is Edition



The BMW 330is Edition awaits testing.

Mercedes-Benz C300 AMG Line

**PICKING THE WINNERS**

Each of the three finalists per category were subjected to back-to-back testing at the Gerotek proving ground by the judging panel (six Cars.co.za editorial team members and 14 guest judges from various backgrounds and fields of expertise). The 20 judges' scores for each of the 39 finalists will only count for 50% of the final standings, however. The other 50% will be based on rankings that the respective vehicle brands represented by the finalists achieved in the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey, conducted in partnership with data specialists Lightstone Consumer. The data incorporates feedback from thou-

sands of vehicle owners, based on their experiences of their vehicles (less than five years old and serviced through franchised outlets).

"Our awards programme is designed to be a guide for all new passenger vehicle buyers, not only those who follow motoring publications," Oosthuizen concludes. "With 50% of the final scores determined by brands' rating in the survey, a vehicle only really stands a very good chance of winning if it is a good product in the eyes of the judges and if its brand delivers solid after-sales service."

◆ Follow #OLMOTORING on social media to learn more about the winners of the Cars Awards as it's announced.



The Ford Ranger in top form on the 4x4 course at Gerotek.



Jury member Nafisa Akabor.