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Chrysler Voyager singled out for poor performance in latest Euro NCAP crash tests; it fared so badly in frontal impact that it was not awarded a score

Voyager gets zero in crash test

Chrysler's Voyager has been given the lowest-ever score in the latest round of Euro NCAP crash tests.

The Voyager, the UK's second best-selling MPV, was given a zero rating in a 40mph

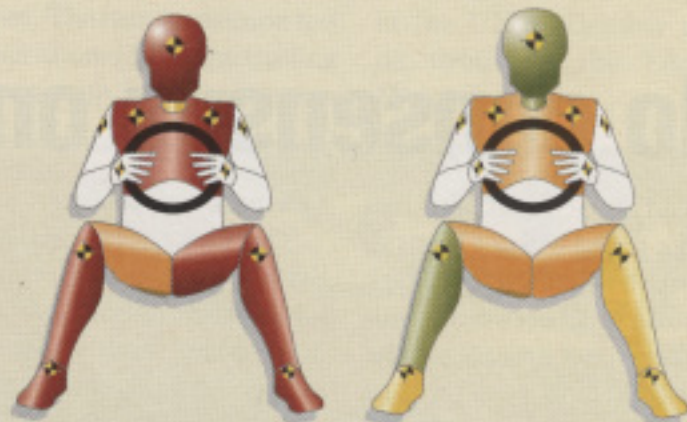
head-on collision - which means that there was virtually no chance of escaping life-threatening injuries. By contrast, the Renault Espace was given a 67 per cent rating, making it the best in class.

Other poor performers included the new Mitsubishi Space Wagon and the discontinued Vauxhall Sintra, which received 24 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. NCAP safety experts said that the



Top-scoring Espace awarded four stars in frontal impact tests; overall score 84 per cent

HOW NCAP'S DUMMY DRIVERS FARED



CHRYSLER VOYAGER		RENAULT ESPACE	
Front and side impact rating	☆☆☆☆	Front and side impact rating	★★★★
Pedestrian test rating	☆☆☆☆	Pedestrian test rating	★★★★
Test scores: Front	0 per cent	Test scores: Front	67 per cent
Side	89 per cent	Side	100 per cent
Overall	45 per cent	Overall	84 per cent

■ Good
 ■ Adequate
 ■ Marginal
 ■ Weak
 ■ Poor

US NEWS HOWARD WALKER

Volkswagen's Beetle plant in Mexico escaped serious damage in last week's earthquake, which measured 6.7 on the Richter scale.

Chrysler's first museum opens in Detroit in October. The Walter P Chrysler Museum will have 75 cars and trucks from the company's past.

Fender-bending drivers should avoid the Mitsubishi Shogun. In US

insurance tests in which 4x4s were crashed at 5mph, the Shogun suffered \$6242 (£3950) in damage, the Merc ML320 just \$2918 (£1845).

Hummer has released a list of its celebrity owners. Boxer Mike Tyson has six, while movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger owns five. Others include tennis champ Andre Agassi, writer Tom Clancy and actor James Earl Jones.

Parts threat from BMW

BMW chairman Joachim Milberg has warned that Rovers will use more imported parts if the pound stays at its current high level.

Milberg, speaking after

BMW secured a £152 million Government grant to save Longbridge, said the Rover 75 had only 75 per cent British parts against the 600's 85 per cent.

BMW will invest £3 billion in Rover in the next five years, starting with the 200 and 400 replacements.

Milberg: sterling too strong





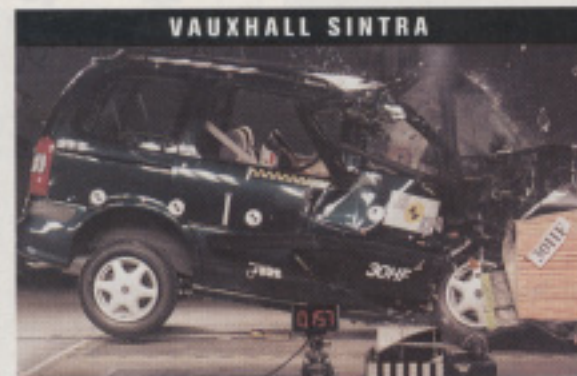
MITSUBISHI SPACE WAGON



TOYOTA PICNIC



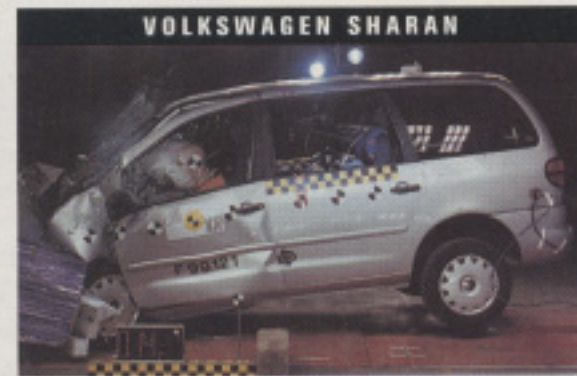
NISSAN SERENA



VAUXHALL SINTRA



PEUGEOT 806



VOLKSWAGEN SHARAN

Sintra's driver could have been killed when the steering column and deployed airbag snapped off in the impact. The results confirm fears that many MPVs perform worse than saloon cars in frontal impacts, although they proved better in side impacts.

Chrysler has hit back at the results, claiming that the Euro NCAP findings were not a true reflection of the Voyager's safety record. Analysis of real-life crash data by Swedish insurance company Folksam gave the Voyager a "Golden Group" award for providing safety levels at least 50 per cent above average.

Chrysler has also pointed to recent US NCAP tests, where the equivalent of the Voyager earned four out of five stars for driver and passenger safety.

Other cars in the Euro NCAP test included the Toyota Picnic, Peugeot 806, Nissan Serena and VW Sharan/Ford Galaxy.

Top performer was the Renault Espace, which was given a maximum four stars for its performance in front and side impacts. It was fol-

lowed by the Picnic, which also received a full four stars.

Despite its poor frontal crash rating, the Space Wagon earned three stars thanks to strong side-impact performance. Other three-star cars were 806, Serena and Sharan/Galaxy, leaving the Sintra and Voyager with two stars.

MPV TEST RESULTS

Model tested	Front and side impact rating	Pedestrian test rating	Overall
Renault Espace	★★★★	★★★★	84pc
Toyota Picnic	★★★★	★★★★	77pc
Peugeot 806	★★★★	★★★★	68pc
Nissan Serena	★★★★	★★★★	67pc
VW Sharan	★★★★	★★★★	66pc
Mitsubishi Space Wagon	★★★★	★★★★	60pc
Vauxhall Sintra	★★★☆☆	★★★★	57pc
Chrysler Voyager	★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆	45pc

Euro NCAP has introduced percentages to allow more accurate comparisons between close-scoring cars. See *What Car?* (on sale 8 July) for full details.

Vauxhall gets ahead in safety



Vauxhall has launched an innovative anti-whiplash head restraint system that dramatically reduces the risk of neck and spinal injuries.

The system, which will be standard on the Omega and Vectra from September, uses a new head restraint design

that pivots towards the driver's head when his body weight returns to the seat back in the event of a front or rear-end impact.

The system will also be an extra-cost option on the Astra range and on the front seats of the new Zafira seven-seat mini-MPV (left).



MADE IN GERMANY



WOLFGANG KÖNIG

It is Opel's 100th birthday this year – time to celebrate Germany's most popular car brand after Volkswagen.

Never mind that it's been part of the General Motors empire since 1929. Opel is still considered to be as German as bratwurst and sauerkraut by the motoring public.

Opel stands for sensible cars for sensible motorists. It's something summed up by one of the company's past advertising slogans: "Opel the dependable."

But times have changed. For the last decade it often seemed

their showrooms by introducing innovative technology and tempting niche products, Opel offered dullness.

Only recently – and just in time for the centenary –



Astra turning tables for Opel

are there signs that the tables might be turning. It's mainly down to the new Astra, which is generally considered to be the best Opel for years. It



"For years, all that could be expected from Opel were mediocre and less than reliable cars"

that the only thing customers could depend on from Opel was mediocre, less than reliable cars.

New models were regularly dogged by teething troubles, putting Opel near the bottom of reliability and quality surveys, and the marque's reputation took a nosedive.

In the early '90s Opel adopted GM's excessive, ill-conceived cost-cutting policies, which had a big effect on engineering and product planning.

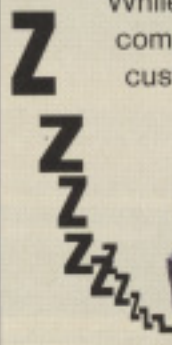
While the competition lured customers into

is giving even VW's seemingly invincible Golf a hard time in the sales charts, and selling at twice the rate of the Ford Focus.

And then there is the Astra-derived Zafira mini-MPV, which shows that for once Opel is right on the pace with a new motoring trend.

Whether all this is enough to put Opel back on the track to success remains to be seen. Insiders are sceptical.

"The basic problem," says one ex-manager, "is the Americans' mistaken belief that the rules for building cars can be transferred from the US to Germany."



Lack of sparkle still hampers many mainstream Opels