



**V50 INTERIOR**  
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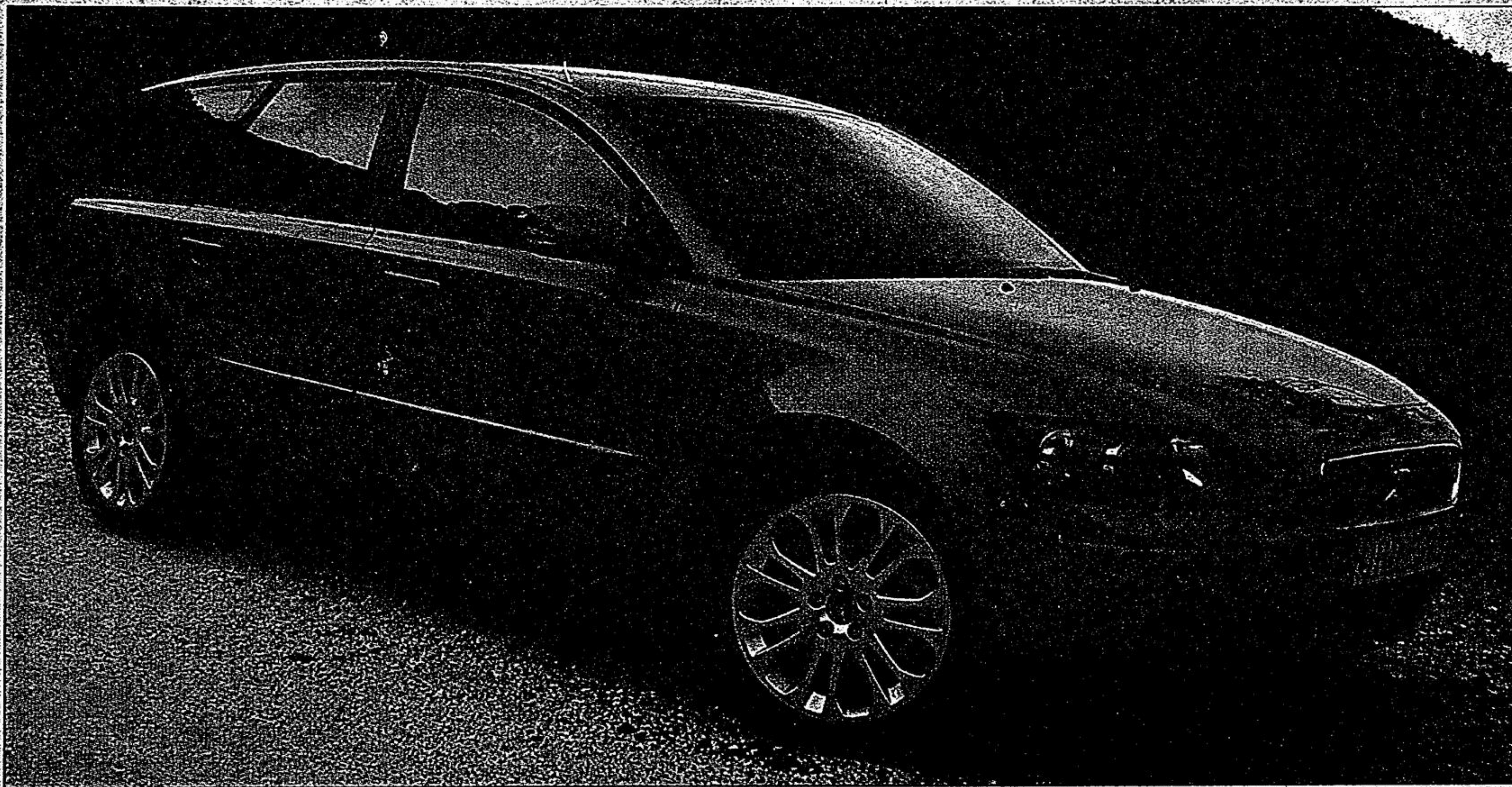
# WHEELS

An advertising section of The Economist & Sun

Thursday, March 11, 2004



**MORE VOLVO V50**  
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Volvo Canada is thinking about importing a diesel version of the V50 wagon. With fantastic torque and handsome appearance (particularly without roof-mounted luggage rack as shown), Volvo believes Canada may finally be ready for diesel like the rest of the world.

## V50 Wagon is handsome and aggressive

By JIM ROBINSON  
Road Worthy

The proof that the automotive industry remains the most competitive business in the world is that, in only the third month of 2004, we are already testing 2005 models.

Volvo is one of the first out of the '05 box with its new V50 Wagon and S40 Sedan, which could be the best small Volvos yet.

Volvo nomenclature gives its wagons "odd" numbers and sedans "even" numbers. It replaces the current S40 Series Sedan and Wagon, which were based on a Mitsubishi platform and mechanics. While not unpretty, they were nonetheless boring to look at, and with a 1.9-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine, tepid performers at best.

The V50 Wagon, tested here (and the S40 Sedan appearing in coming weeks on these pages) now relies on Ford-sister company Mazda for its chassis while opting for Volvo-derived power and transmissions for much needed, and even more enjoyable, kick.

Power comes from two versions of Volvo's five-cylinder engine family. The base wagon gets the 2.4-litre with 168 hp and 166 ft/lb of torque. The T5 gets the 2.5 light pressure turbo making 218 hp and 236 ft/lb of torque. Both are available in front-drive with all-wheel-drive as an option only on the T5. Both come with a five-speed automatic with Geartronic selectable manual shifting. There is a five-speed manual with the base car or a six-speed on the T5. In the T5, as tested here, 0-100 km/h is reached in 7.3 seconds in the auto and 6.9 seconds in the six-speed.

Suspension of the latest iteration on spring-struts at the front and a coil sprung independent multilink at the rear. Being a Volvo, it is also leading edge in terms of passenger safety with the V50 coming standard with four-wheel disc brakes, ABS and electronic brake control.

Our route took us up through the rugged mountains to the north of Malaga, Spain. Breathtaking vistas and a challenging climb didn't break sweat in the diesel, most of which was done in fourth gear, thanks to absolute gobs of torque. That, coupled with a supple suspension, ensured the tires never scabbled for grip on the spotty asphalt that, like the rest of this area of Spain, seems to be in a constant state of decay through either disdain or indifference.

The diesel was also remarkably quiet, even

more so that the T5 AWD we drove later. Volvo Canada is currently wrestling with whether or not to import the diesel. It is a major buying decision to European buyers, especially in Germany. But here, Volvo is concerned if the extra \$2,500-\$3,000 premium over the gasoline version is something Canadians are ready to pay for. A consumer would have to decide if the \$300-\$400 less they would pay annually in fuel would justify the outlay for the diesel. On the plus side, the feeling of road-going torque is very satisfying to the driver, particularly when powering onto a 400-series highway at rush hour. All the revs in the world aren't worth squat if the wheels aren't pushing you forward fast enough to join the flow of traffic.

See BEST VOLVO YET, page 10

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