



10 years **FordFocus**

Focus on the future

The Focus didn't just represent a startling change of direction when it came to design but, also, a radical new way of thinking within Ford of Europe



Swooping curves, bisecting lines, taut wheel arch eyebrows. The Focus was unlike any Ford on the market – for that matter it was unlike any of its rivals



Break with the past

When the Model T and Escort were launched both were more than the sum of their parts. As well as making the concept of mass production a reality, the Model T put the world on wheels giving ordinary people a chance to travel where and when they wanted to.

During its three decades the Escort became one of the most successful cars ever built, selling 20 million examples worldwide. For many people it was the car they learned to drive in or the car that took them on memorable holidays. It also developed into one of the most potent and affordable competition cars motor sport has ever seen.

The car that succeeded the Escort at the heart of Ford's European product line-up in 1998 was all-new. But Focus wasn't simply replacing the Escort, it was the symbol of a new Ford business philosophy.

The Focus was a break with the past, hence the reason why the company chose not to give it the old name – a brave move considering the affection held for the Escort moniker.

To underline this message, Ford commissioned a dramatic new stand for the 1998 Geneva Salon. Its focal point was a spectacular 60-metre bridge that extended from the show floor to an extension of the stand on the level above.

The bridge wasn't just a design artefact but a metaphor for Ford's new customer policy; "a symbol of our continuing commitment to connect everything we do with the desires of every one of our customers" was how it was described in the press hand out at the time.

It has to be said that the European diet of family hatches were a pretty bland bunch at that time: indifferent styling, build quality and dynamics. Ford's senior management knew their new model needed to make a bold statement and stand out from the crowd. Focus would shake up the 'C' car segment and also usher in a new era of Ford products that would concentrate on four fundamentals: design and package, driving dynamics, ingenuity and accessibility.

Fundamental to this was the way in



which Focus adopted Ford's New Edge design cues which were radically different from anything the company had ever done before on a mainstream model and suddenly made its European and Japanese rivals look jaded.

This new design language had been overseen by Jack Telnack and Claude Lobo and executed by Australian designer, John Doughty. Most observers at the unveiling thought the Focus was the most accomplished interpretation yet of the new Ford style.

A major training event in Berlin introduced the Focus to Ford dealers and employees from around the world and was a lynchpin in the company's new philosophy. The bridge, opposite, featured on the Ford Geneva show stand in 1998

New design language



Its combination of sharp swage lines running down the flanks and prescribed wheelarches combined with trapezoidal headlamp clusters that pulled right into the wings and high mounted rear lamp assemblies presented a powerful statement that design was, once more, to the front of Ford's strategy.

Although the interior remained hidden until the Paris Motor Show later in the year when that was eventually revealed it, too, broke ranks with what Ford had achieved before. Material quality as well as fit and finish were a marked improvement over the old Escort whilst the interior architecture, although it owed some elements to the Ka, was a complex of bisecting lines and curves echoing the Focus' external design language.

It was more than just a pretty face; beneath the coachwork was an all-new structure that would underpin a variety

of new products in the coming years. MacPherson struts were retained at the front but with much reduced 'stiction', whilst a new – and then – novel independent



Control Blade rear suspension provided levels of grip and comfort normally associated with far more complex and costly five-link systems.

At launch only three- and five-door hatchbacks plus a wagon version were available, but the product planners at Ford had more tricks up their sleeve.

Power came from a range of twin-cam 16-valve Zetec engines ranging from 1.4-litre, 74Bhp (55kW/75PS) through to two-litre 129Bhp (96kW/130PS).

The orders and accolades came thick and fast: the new Focus was the first car to be nominated as Car Of The Year simultaneously in the USA and Europe – it would garner a further 75 awards in the years to come – and by March 1999 100,000 had been sold in Europe alone with a further 200,000 orders waiting in the wings, despite the cars not reaching the dealer network until autumn 1998.



Smart looking five-door Focus with alloy wheels (far left) was an instant hit. The Focus range included a saloon (left above) and wagon (left below) from the start. Autocar had to wait until August to get the full story on the new Focus (opposite)



The Focus World Rally Championship prototype was built at Ford's Dunton Technical Centre, and took centre stage alongside the production car at the 1998 Paris Motor Show

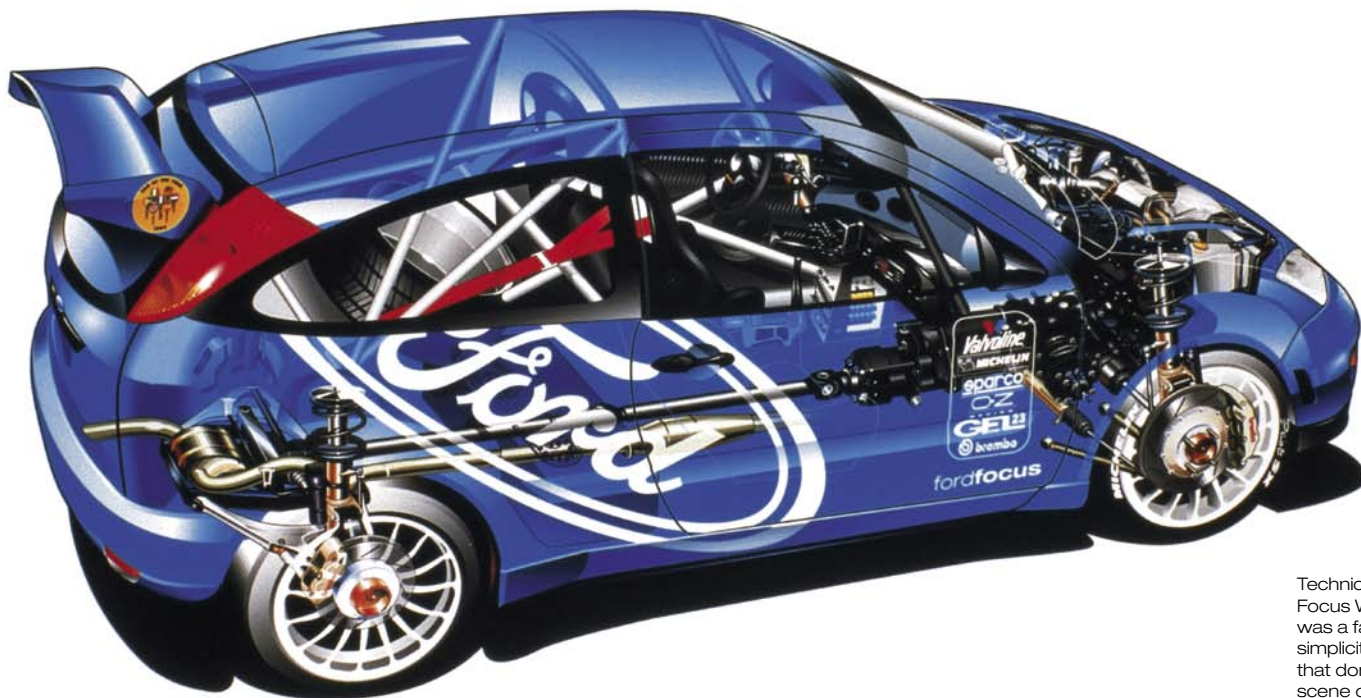


The Focus caught the public's and the media's imagination like no other car since the original Escort. It was subjected to endless testing and put through its paces in sometimes unconventional manner such as when British journalists, Simon Hacker

and Jeremy Taylor lived and slept in a two-litre Ghia for 100 hours in March 2000 to set a new world record.

Sharing that Paris Show stand was the prototype of the forthcoming World Rally Championship Focus, finished in an eye-catching metallic racing blue.

Each one rumoured to cost some £400,000 this car was a far cry from the humble Escort Roger Clark drove: four-wheel drive with a turbocharged engine producing 300Bhp (224kW/227PS) and 406 lbs ft (550Nm) and crammed with the latest electronic systems.



Technically, the 1999 Focus World Rally Car was a far cry from the simplicity of the Escort that dominated the rally scene of the 1970s



For the first time in its rallying history Ford had entrusted the development and running of its rally team to a third party, M-Sport founded and run by former Ford works driver, Malcolm Wilson.

The determination of the new team to succeed from the start was underlined by recruiting the sensationally fast late Colin McRae who had become the youngest world rallying champion in 1995 aged 27.

Although McRae lost third place in the

1999 Monte Carlo rally due to a technical problem, the team bounced back to score notable victories in the Safari and Portugal rallies – two of the toughest on the championship circuit. From the outset it was obvious that the Focus would continue Ford's winning ways.

By the end of 2001 the Focus had become the world's best selling car with 917,000 sales fulfilling Ford's ambition of creating a car that had global appeal.

Over the years hot versions of the Escort had acquired an iconic status amongst enthusiast drivers and Ford wasn't about to abandon those potential customers when the Focus came along.

First up in 2002 was the Focus ST170 with a tuned version of the two-litre Duratec engine that pumped out 167Bhp or 170PS, hence the name, at 7000rpm and 195Nm from 2500rpm. All the credentials for a sporty engine were there: Mahle pistons, a new freer flowing

Left: In 1999, the Focus World Rally car made its competition debut in this striking Martini livery.
2002 Focus ST170
(below)





aluminium cylinder head with bigger, 33.5mm, inlet valves, a 10.2:1 compression ratio and continuously variable valve timing. The result was a lusty free-revving engine, with an intake note shrill enough to encourage and please the sporting driver.

Transmitting the new found energy to the front wheels was a six-speed close-ratio gearbox from Getrag that was the same external size as the five-speed unit that it replaced.

Enthusiasts only had to wait another six months before the legendary RS badge appeared on the Focus.

The gaping grille at the front gave a hint of what the car was all about as it was needed to gulp as much air into the two-litre 16-valve Duratec RS engine as possible, feeding the custom-built Garrett GT 2560LS turbocharger and an air-to-water intercooler. The result was a handy 158kW/160PS at 5500rpm and a very

useful 310Nm at 3500rpm. All of which was directed to the tarmac via an uprated five-speed MTX75 gearbox with a rally-bred Quaife manufactured Automatic Torque-Biasing differential.

Unlike some hot hatches the RS eschewed electronic trickery to maintain traction and stability. Staying on the road was down to the skills of the person gripping the steering wheel, not a boffin who programmed a management system.

2002 Focus RS



C-MAX – new edge

In late 2003 for the following model year, Ford added the C-MAX to the Focus range. Dubbed as a Multi Activity Vehicle it had been hinted at ever since the Focus first appeared, but wary of producing a 'me too' product Ford delayed its launch until it felt it had perfected the design and engineering to deliver a product that lived up to the demands of the newly energised Blue Oval. A seating system that converted the five-seater into four with extra leg room for the rear passengers was one of the more noticeable features.

But beneath its elegant design the Focus C-MAX contained very different but vital developments that would have a profound effect on Ford's future model strategy and the Focus in particular.

During the 1990s there was a proliferation of 'top hat' engineering. Cars built on identical platforms and running gear that was mildly tuned to deliver different dynamic characteristics and then topped off with individual exterior bodywork and mildly re-worked interiors.

This widespread use of resources obviously reduced costs and improved profitability, but Ford wanted to go a step further by using a series of interchangeable modules that could be used, almost Lego-like, to manufacture a wide variety of models. At that time Ford's product portfolio included Mazda, Volvo, Jaguar and Land Rover – if basic engineering components could be amortised across several brands and numerous product ranges without damaging individual brand identities then the benefits in reducing development time and manufacturing costs are obvious. In the case of the Focus C-MAX, key elements of the

architecture were shared with Mazda and Volvo.

The C-MAX was the first car bearing the Blue Oval to benefit from this Shared Technology initiative and winning the 'What Car?' best MPV title in 2004 was, surely, vindication that this strategy was already paying dividends.

An overlooked aspect of this approach is knowledge sharing. The additional benefit of working that way was pooling knowledge and expertise from three marques to the benefit of all.

Under this initiative, the brands work together to develop a broad kit of technologies that they can use as they develop their own unique vehicles. By sharing certain core technologies that do not need to be differentiated for reasons of brand, e.g. a wiring harness, fluids, batteries, fasteners, suspension components, etc., the companies can then leverage the full scale of their engineering knowledge and experience, as well as collective buying power for piece and material cost. This approach also helps to reduce duplication and complexity in engineering processes, leading to higher



The second generation

quality and more robust components and sub-assemblies.

With the C car shared technologies Ford got the best of all worlds: a car that embodied expertise from Ford, Volvo and Mazda. With all three sitting together they were able to raise their collective game and then create their own unique products.

What was perhaps overlooked by many when the C-MAX was launched was how the upgraded interior, the materials and fit and finish were altogether much improved even if the design language was somewhat more restrained.

Part of this drive for improved perception of interior quality and a less flamboyant exterior design language was driven by new global design boss, J. Mays and then head of C-car development in Europe, Derrick Kuzak.

Mays was determined to recruit the best designers from around the globe and one of those he brought in was the quietly spoken Chris Bird. Having worked with Bird in the past he knew and appreciated the man's attention to detail and quality and Mays was determined that the second generation Focus should epitomise all of those qualities.

Six years and four million sales in 80 countries later, the second generation Focus was revealed to a somewhat less enthusiastic media who believed the new design was not as energetic or bold as the original. Bird was unrepentant about the car's comparative conservatism in the light of the step change that had been made in quality, justifiably arguing that the





goal was to maintain the Focus identity and significantly enhance craftsmanship rather than reinvent the car all over again. Trying to achieve both simultaneously would have led to neither target being achieved. One thing all motoring journalists agreed on, however, was that Ford had done it again in making the new Focus even more fun to drive than the original.

Whilst all this was happening world trade was undergoing a seismic change; China was opening its market and manufacturers like Ford were quick to realise the potential of markets like China, India, Taiwan and other newly emergent economic entities in the Far East.

But there are different tastes in the Far East; saloons are preferred over hatchbacks so it's no surprise, then, that a thinly disguised concept version of the four-door Focus was unveiled at the 2004 Beijing Motor Show.

Later in the same year at the Paris Salon, Ford took the wraps off the Focus Vignale Concept a practically undisguised coupé-cabriolet version of the Focus that would be engineered with master Italian coachbuilder, Pininfarina. It was launched in 2006, and provided further evidence of the flexibility of the engineering programme.



Beijing debut (top left), Paris debut for Vignale Concept (bottom left), and 2004 Focus five-door hatch (above)

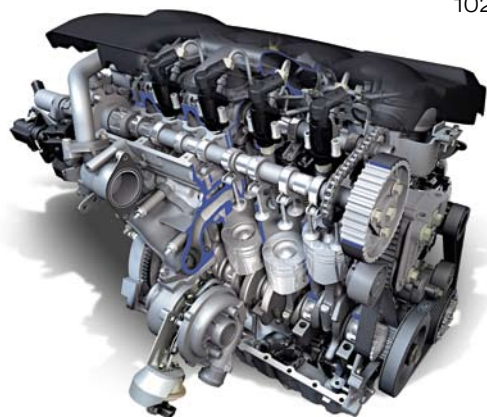




Ninety per cent of torsional stiffness disappears when you take the roof away, but Ford and Pininfarina worked hard to regain much of that through extended use of high strength and ultra-high strength steels throughout the structure in areas like the 'A' pillars, door beams and rocker rails as well as a torsion beam at the rear. As a result stiffness with the roof down equalled that of a '98 three-door Focus and with it in place it's not far off double.

More conservative the second generation Focus might have been, but that didn't stop 100,000 Europeans buying them by June 2005, appreciating the improved quality and the car's class leading ride and handling.

Just eight months later the four millionth Focus, a Colorado red, 134Bhp (100 kW/102PS) TDCi four-door, left the Saarlouis production line.



Sophisticated and high quality interior was a hallmark of the second generation Focus (left). The Duratorq TDCi diesel engines were a joint development between Ford and PSA Peugeot-Citroën (far left)



Martin Smith's design team successfully applied kinetic design elements to the latest Focus (right). Pininfarina build the handsome Coupé-Cabriolet (left)

Development

With the C-MAX and Coupé-Cabriolet in place, Ford's shared technologies initiative was beginning to reap dividends as the European market fragmented into an increasing number of niches. Ford caught all its rivals on the back foot when, at the 2006 Geneva Salon it previewed the SAV concept, which would eventually become the new Ford S-MAX, and the first of Ford's all-new CD car range, made possible only

through the efficiencies of sharing technologies between brands.

Significantly, the SAV Concept heralded the arrival of a new design DNA for Ford of Europe, described as 'kinetic design'.

The design team was now led by Martin Smith, who set about applying the key elements of the Ford 'kinetic design' look to the Ford of Europe range, starting with the Galaxy and S-MAX (the car that also won the Car of the Year title in 2007), followed by the all-new Mondeo, the freshened C-MAX and the revised 2008 Focus range.



Martin Smith with the S-MAX that started the revolution in Ford styling and became known as 'kinetic design' (right), now successfully applied across the brand in cars such as the Kuga crossover (below)



For the 2008 Focus, Smith and his team ensured that any concerns over the conservative styling of Focus would be left behind as they revealed a significantly revised new model. With every panel changed except for the roof, the new Focus featured a host of 'kinetic design' styling cues ensuring that the the company's most important model now had the looks to match the Focus reputation for class leading dynamics.

The new 'family look' for Ford of Europe's portfolio of cars has since been extended to the dynamic Kuga crossover, which

benefits from Focus technology, and the new B-car range – the Fiesta and the Ka.

For the Focus range, July 2008 saw a revered badge in Ford history making a come back at the London Motor Show. Nearly four decades after the launch of the original Ford RS model – the 1970 Escort RS1600 – the RS badge reappeared on a preview model for a new generation of Focus RS.

The new Focus RS, due for launch early in 2009, will be the fastest Ford volume production model ever, and also one of the few cars to put 300PS through its



Kinetic design is a visual portrayal of Ford's class-leading ride and handling attributes





front wheels, thanks to its innovative 'RevoKnuckle' front suspension and an advanced Quaife-designed automatic torque biasing differential.

The core architecture and engineering of the latest Ford Focus has proved to be extraordinarily flexible, and this is clearly evidenced in the new dynamic Ford Kuga crossover vehicle.

At the 2006 Paris Motor Show, Ford revealed how its kinetic design approach could be applied to the compact all-wheel-

drive crossover niche with the Iosis X Concept. This lithe, coupé-profiled SUV was a glimpse of more to come. Two years on, Kuga hit the roads as one of, if not the, sexiest small 'soft roaders' on the market. A long way from being a hard-core off-roader, Kuga is, nevertheless, as competent off-road as its mainstream rivals, but vastly superior on-road thanks to its sharing of many key components from the Focus range.

The RS badge was revived at the 2008 London Motor Show with this rally-inspired three-door, complete with competition style seats (top left). The bright green paint is a modern interpretation of that used on the original Escort RS 1600





The 2005 Focus ST was the base for the new Focus World Rally Car which made its competition debut in 2006, taking the Manufacturers' World Rally Championship for that year and also for 2007. Matthew Wilson thrills the crowds at Goodwood's Festival of Speed (top right) a far cry from the harsh conditions of international rallying



21st Century.

In the motor sport arena, too, the Focus had proved that it was a worthy successor to the legendary Escort.

Readers might be forgiven in thinking that Ford had abandoned rallying with the Focus, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. In 1997 it contracted M-Sport, run by former Escort driver Malcolm Wilson, to develop the Focus into a winning rally car. The team promptly landed two of the biggest names in international rallying: Martini as the headline sponsor and the late Colin McRae as lead driver.

The ultimate prize of the driver's championship eluded both McRae and Ford although he scored notable victories on some of the world's toughest rallies including the 1999 and 2002 Safari rallies. But patience is a virtue in the dust and mud of rallying and Ford was rewarded with the manufacturers' championship in 2006 and 2007 at the hands of drivers Marcus Grönholm and Mikko Hirvonen, again proving that Blue Oval durability is as good today as it was when the first Model T rolled off the production line.

If Henry Ford was to come back 100 years after his first 'Tin Lizzie' trundled onto the streets of Detroit he wouldn't recognise the world of the 21st Century: Computers, the internet, iPods, mobile 'phones, intercontinental travel at a whim.

But there is one thing that he would recognise – a 2008 Ford Focus or any of its derivatives. Why? Because the men and women who designed and developed that car hold dear the same goals that Ford did 100 years ago: no nonsense, practical, reliable engineering that's financially accessible to anyone wherever in the world they are.

Some things in life never change.



Henry Ford's original philosophy of making reliable, cost-effective motoring available to a global audience, as epitomised in the Model T continued in the Escort and is carried forward into a new Millennium with the Focus





Sun motoring editor, Ken Gibson recalls a frustrating night in Geneva:

“The Ford Focus may be one of the best known names in motoring, but trying to get the name before the car was officially unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show in 1998 was a nightmare.

The name of the car that was to replace the legendary Escort model was the best kept secret in motoring, which is red rag to a bull for any self respecting journalist.

Only a handful of senior Ford executives knew the name and they were all in fear of their jobs if the name leaked out.

Motoring hacks had been trying for months to prise the name out of Ford by any means possible; we were even reduced to buying executives a drink, but all to no avail.

But it reached ridiculous levels when Ford told me the name would be announced by then chief executive, Jacques Nasser on the eve of the Geneva Show.

Unfortunately the press conference was not until 9.30 pm and by the time Nasser was finished speaking it would be the wrong side of 10 pm, and that was too late to make anything for the next day even the front page of a national newspaper.

I told Ford as important as the new car was it was not important enough for page one, but that if they could give me the

name in confidence around six pm I could get a full page article on the end of the Escort, together with the car's name.

Amazingly they said it was not possible, despite agreeing with me that they were missing a great opportunity for huge amounts of publicity, but said that Nasser had sworn everyone to secrecy until he made the announcement that night.

Totally frustrated as I waited for the press conference to start I spotted Nasser heading for the announcement surrounded by a posse of Ford executives and saw my last chance to get the elusive name.

I knew Nasser reasonably well so I walked up and asked for a word. He asked me how I was and I told him 'bloody frustrated', he asked me why and I said because of him and his embargo.

When I told him why his deadline was unfair to daily newspapers because we weren't on sale until 6 am next day, but that radio and TV reporters would get the name in time for their late night bulletins, he smiled.

Then he told me I had a very fair point but it was too late to change his plans, although he told me I should 'focus' hard on thinking what the name could be. Little did I realise that he had given me the name on a plate ...”

Note: Ford of Europe has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in this press pack is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate and based on detailed research.

