

TG SUV OF THE YEAR

VOLVO XC60

Sexy Swede

Volvo has finally shed its safe maker image - it is now a company that can make cool stuff - like the XC60, our SUV of the Year

BACK IN THE DAY, A VOLVO WOULD NOT set your pulse racing. You had to be really old and wise to look past the block-edged designs and appreciate all that inner beauty. And therein lay the problem. There may have been a lot of old people around but they were unlikely to buy more than one car in their lifetime.

Which meant the target market was going to be six feet under sooner rather than later. Not good business sense, no? So what did Volvo do? They fired the 1980s design team and got in some fresh blood, mainly people who had paid attention when curves were being taught in geometry class. The result is a Volvo that appeals to the young, a Volvo that doesn't put you to sleep, a Volvo that is effing vulgar by grandpa's standards.

The XC60 is a Volvo that, for the first time, you actually want. It is curvy, aggressive looking and unquestionably desirable. It targets the young and does a bloody good job of it. At TG, we like to consider ourselves young, even though some of us are

only really young at heart. But we love how the XC60 looks standing in the driveway.

Full marks to Volvo for making an XC60 that doesn't go well with receding hairlines. But Volvo hasn't exactly forgotten its roots. So the good looking XC60 has its bases covered as far as safety goes too. You not only get the usual airbags and ABS, you also get a Volvo safety boffin that sits in the front of the car and recognises other cars, even pedestrians and warns the driver.

The XC60 is a well rounded package and does everything very well. It may not be as driver-focused as say the BMW X3, which was closest contender for the title, but it scores high on space, comfort and safety - and the fact it looks so good.

The BMW X3 was not far behind - it's definitely much nicer to drive and feels nimble, but it also feels more like a grownup sedan than a purpose-built soft-roader. The XC60 justifies the Sport Utility tag that much better. And the fact that it is unlike any other Volvo before it makes it our pick for SUV of the Year.



LOCATION COURTESY: DELLA ADVENTURE, LONAVLA

WHAT WE SAID

'Apart from the now common-place safety systems, the safety options on the XC60 would impress Death itself'

