

OVERDRIVE

Malcolm back in muddle

BY GERRY MALLOY

Remember Malcolm Bricklin?

He's the controversial American who brought production of the illconceived Bricklin gull-wing sports car to New Brunswick - and the Yugo to the United States.

Bricklin, who turns 66 next month, has announced the formation of a new firm, Visionary Vehicles LLC, and a deal with Chery Automobile Co.,

owned by the Chinese government. The venture will "import a totally new line of quality vehicles at exceptionally low price points to North America."

Beginning in 2007, the Floridaraised entrepreneur says, Visionary will begin importing a full lineup of five different Chery-built vehicles.

These consist of an entry-level compact, a midsize sedan, a crossover sedan, a luxury sport coupe and an SUV. None of the vehicles is yet in production. The vehicles will be designed by

"renowned European and Japanese designers, including Bertone and Pininfarina," according to a Visionary media release.

They will "benefit from Chery's modern manufacturing capabilities and efficiencies."

That would appear to be a daunting task, given the time frame announced.

The Chery fleet will be priced 30 per cent below comparable models currently being sold in the marketplace, the company says.

It will also have a warranty equal to the best in the industry: 10 years/100,000 miles (160,000 km).

Bricklin plans to recruit a network of 250 dealers across the United States. "These dealers must be willing to invest everything necessary to ensure all of our success," he says, "and by doing so, get to own a piece of everyone's game."

Although Bricklin is remembered mostly for his spectacular failures, he has had his successes, too.

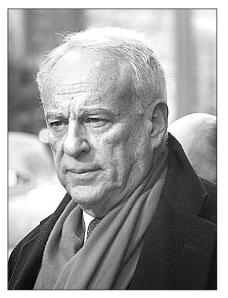
He was the one who first brought Subaru to North America.

This time around, he asserts that he has an impressive list of financial backers, high-profile board members and "key partners."



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

The futuristic Bricklin sports car of the '70s: right up there with the Edsel.



Malcolm Bricklin has new venture with Chinese automaker, Italian designers.

Although no plans have been announced for Canadian distribution of the Chinese cars, the venture has a strong Canadian connection in Maurice Strong, once at the helm of Petro-Canada, Power Corporation of Cana-

da and Ontario Hydro.

According to Bricklin, Strong will chair Visionary's technology and environmental advisory board, developing a worldwide team of scientists, technology experts and environmental professionals for the company.

Chery is among the second echelon of Chinese automakers, ranking eighth in domestic sales.

It's currently embroiled in a bitter dispute with General Motors over patent and intellectual property infringement. Chery's diminutive model appears to be a carbon copy of the Chevrolet Spark, itself derived from the Daewoo Matiz.

GM may yet challenge Chery in Chinese court over the apparently blatant bootlegging of its design and engineering. Visionary has hired Harbour Consulting of Troy, Mich., to evaluate the capabilities of Chery's plants in China.

Harbour is known for its annual assessment of auto industry manufacturing performance through The Harbour Report.

Toronto Star

Family matters

The lighter side of driving

BY LINDA McAVOY

Why can't we try to just get along in 2005, especially on the highway? Let's vow to drive with care, control and courtesy. And while we're at it, let's enjoy the ride.

Yes, I know: easier said than done, what with squabbling riders and sharing the highway with the occasional ignoramus.

Still, you never know what's around the next bend.

Those back-seat Bickersons might nod off, traffic could clear up, some small thing could come along to make

On the road, you take your guffaws wherever you can get them, including road signs able to evoke a chuckle or

For instance, there's that lovely rock-

and-mortar marker that the Town of Grimsby put up along the QEW a while back, complete with snappy motto. Unfortunately, some miscreant stole

the letters S, B and Y, rendering the town the Grim Gateway to Niagara, but it no doubt amused many passing motorists until it was fixed.

Then there's a certain sign in Algonquin Provincial Park that my family looks for on visits. It stands on a narrow road that winds through forests to a

Frequented by the occasional moose, the road isn't in the best condition, so a sign warns of Soft Shoulders.

Park authorities, it seems, later changed their minds, deciding to go with No Shoulders.

However, they elected to save taxpayer dollars by simply sticking new lettering over old. The result has, I'm sure, led many a

newcomer to proceed with extreme caution to avoid encountering Snot Shoulders.

My crew recently passed a commercial florist truck sporting a huge photo of flowers with the tagline: "They're real and they're spectacular."

Well, the Seinfeld-savvy occupants of my car knew full well that the line was originally uttered by Teri Hatcher when Seinfeld queried the authenticity of her, um, blossomy assets.

We once spotted a roadside bakerauto parts store, now defunct, whose name has stuck with us: Tarts and

linda@mcavoy.com Special to The Hamilton Spectator

PRESIDENTIAL: The new Bush-mobile



General Motors will introduce the production model of the 2006 Cadillac DTS Presidential Limousine at next month's auto show in Chicago. President George W. Bush previewed Cadillac's newest model when he took his inaugural parade last week.

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