

## The road to SUVs

- In the past three decades SEAT has developed its path to SUVs with various concept cars
- From the beachy Marbella Concept to the connected 20v20, these models inspired the current range
- Greater ground clearance, compact design and innovative technology are all shared characteristics

**Martorell, 17/12/2019.** Ateca, Arona and Tarraco. They are the three SUVs in SEAT's current lineup, which took off in 2016. However, their beginnings go back much further. For more than three decades, several concept cars have paved the way for today's SUVs. **"Solid sporty proportions, front ends with a bold personality and attention to detail combined with the latest technological advances are the similarities that are reflected in the current range"**, says Xavier Villanueva, a designer of exteriors at SEAT. The following piece looks back at the predecessors that inspired the SUVs seen on the road today.

**SEAT Marbella Playa Concept:** In 1991 Nirvana released their hit "Smells like teen spirit", the same year that SEAT presented the Marbella Playa Concept at the Frankfurt Motor Show. It was a bold design exercise in the shape of a pick-up, ideal for enjoying leisure time in nature. With more height and a different grille compared to the Marbella, it featured a 40 hp engine and 4x4 styling. **"It stood out with bright, youthful colours as well as round foglights at the front"**, explains Xavier.

**Salsa Emoción:** Back in 2000, when Australian swimmer Ian Thorpe won five medals at the Sydney Olympic Games, SEAT was preparing a concept car to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its Technical Centre. The model had more ground clearance, 310 mm in off road mode, a highlight that began to point the way to the SUV architecture of the future. **"It features lateral tension lines for the first time that will later evolve on the IBX to look more like those on the SEAT Arona"**, says the designer. Presented at the Paris Motor Show, its 250 hp engine enabled it to tackle all kinds of terrain. In fact, the versatility of today's crossovers could already be seen on the Salsa Emoción, which was equipped with three drive modes (Off Road, Sport and Street) in a system called "Multi Driving Concept".

**Tribu:** The same year as Steve Jobs presented the first iPhone (2007), SEAT showcased the Tribu at the Geneva Motor Show in a package that included every SUV characteristic for the first time: off-road styling, ample ground clearance and a compact silhouette. Following in the wake of the Salsa Emoción, the Tribu featured three drive modes (Urban, Sport and Freerun) and began to combine urban character with 4x4 readiness. **"On the Ateca we can now see squarer wheel arches, and the nestled triangular graphics of the rear lights defined a style that inspired the SEAT Tarraco"**, he adds.

**IBX:** In early 2011, a little known photography app came out called Instagram, which today has more than 1 billion users. That same year, SEAT presented the IBX in Geneva, a car that gave continuity to the SUV architecture found on the Tribu, but with more sculpted lines. **"The high**

**front end, compact passenger compartment, taut surfaces and assertive looking headlamps are a few of its traits that can now be seen on the Ateca and the Arona”,** assures Xavier. Furthermore, the IBX is also equipped with state of the art technology, including full LED lighting and an electric hybrid engine.

**20v20:** When cinemas all over the world were debuting “Star Wars: the force awakens”, SEAT was presenting its latest SUV concept car prior to launching the first series model, the Ateca. The 20v20, displayed for the first time in Geneva, featured a sporty coupe design with a distinct SUV personality, but its main trait was an essential attribute in today’s cars – connectivity. At its core was the Personal Drive, a touch device in the shape of a coin that worked as a mobile navigation system and remote control to activate the car’s climate control. **“It was like carrying your car’s heart around in your pocket”,** says Xavier.

**Altea Freetrack and Leon Cross Sport:** These are two further concepts that helped pave the way to SUVs. Displayed for the first time at the 2007 Geneva Motor Show, the Altea Freetrack was the culmination of the Multi Drive concept. On the other hand, the Leon Cross Sport, presented in Frankfurt in 2015, combined the performance of a compact sports car with the versatility of an all-wheeler.

**From concept to road ready:** These concepts have all shaped the DNA of the SEAT Ateca, Arona and Tarraco. Even though each one features its own distinct personality, all three share design made in Barcelona. The result, a booming segment in Europe, that accounts for more than 40% of the brand’s sales.

**SEAT** is the only company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets cars in Spain. Member of the Volkswagen Group, the multinational has its headquarters in Martorell (Barcelona), exports the 80% of its vehicles, and is present in 80 countries on all five continents. In 2018, SEAT sold 517,600 cars, the highest figure in the 68-year history of the brand, posted a profit after tax of 294 million euros and a record turnover of close to 10 billion euros.

The SEAT Group employs over 15,000 professionals and has three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the highly successful Ibiza, Arona and Leon. Additionally, the company produces the Ateca in the Czech Republic, the Tarraco in Germany, the Alhambra in Portugal and the Mii electric, SEAT’s first 100% electric car, in Slovakia.

The multinational has a Technical Centre, which operates as a knowledge hub that brings together 1,000 engineers who are focused on developing innovation for Spain’s largest industrial investor in R&D. SEAT already features the latest connectivity technology in its vehicle range and it is currently engaged in the company’s global digitalisation process to promote the mobility of the future.

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