

KIA IN car

# EV6



THE  
DEFINITIVE  
VERDICT



# THE SILENT COUP



The battle to build the perfect family EV  
hots up: Kia's bold new EV6 takes on  
the best of the breed from VW and Ford

Words Gavin Green Photography Alex Tapley



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he car world has been shaken and stirred. The world's most valuable automotive company didn't exist 20 years ago and makes a type of vehicle that, only 10 years ago, was more curio than proper car.

Former winners are now losers. Volkswagen decayed from world number one to corporate villain. The motor industry's most notorious polluter is now the old-school car industry's highest-profile 'zero emissions' EV advocate.

Conversely, a few former League Two players have been elevated to the top tier. Hyundai has given us one of the most desirable new electric cars, the Ioniq 5. Now, Hyundai's sister brand Kia brings its own distinctive look and much high tech with the EV6, the first Kia designed from the outset as an electric car. The EV6 uses the same platform as the Ioniq 5. It also uses an 800-volt electrical system, as seen on Porsche's Taycan. The advantages are manifold, from faster charging to lighter cabling and less heat build-up. It has double the voltage of most rival EVs.

America's motor industry has also been shaken out of its rustbelt lethargy. Its stand-out star car company is now from Silicon Valley, not Detroit. Yet Detroit is changing fast too, and there's no stranger example than the new Mustang. America's best-known car name has been re-purposed from a thundering V8-powered fastback into an electric crossover. Okay, the Mustang association is all a bit contrived, but the car's surprisingly good, a true Tesla rival. The first Ford designed from scratch as an electric car even has a giant touchscreen Apple would be proud of.

A Mustang-vs-Kia comparison shows how momentarily the car world has changed. Our final protagonist comes from Volkswagen, whose hasty transformation from diesel diehard to EV evangelist is surely the most astonishing makeover in car industry history. Today, we're driving the new ID.4 GTX, the first electric VW to use the new 'performance' GTX badge. VW says GTX is the electric equivalent of GTI, and points out that the ID.4 GTX accelerates harder than a Golf GTI. It's also the first ID to use twin motors, one per axle, and has firmer suspension and bigger wheels with lower-profile tyres.

We collect the Kia from Stansted Airport, drive via Constable's and Gainsborough's Suffolk, to historic Harwich, a crucial shipping port in the Napoleonic and two world wars, and where Samuel Pepys served as MP.

First impressions are positive. The EV6 is a striking vehicle, bearing more than a passing resemblance to Jaguar's comely i-Pace. It's low for a crossover, has a cab-forward style, big wheels and wings and body sides, and a long wheelbase – longer than a Sorento SUV. Yet it's not particularly long overall, the same length as a Tesla Model 3 or a BMW 3-series. Cabin space is cavernous, the best in class. It's almost limo-like in the back. The boot is big too, although the smallest in this test.

The Kia's cabin is also the classiest here, and by some margin. The dashboard is lean and minimalist, and handsomely shaped. It's trimmed in recycled plastic bottles and the touch is pleasing, the appearance modern. There are two big curved digital screens. There's an instrument cluster in front of the driver, including vehicle speed and range, and a high-definition centre touchscreen for infotainment and navigation. Below is a touch bar to control climate as well as audio volume, the controls used most often. It's a clever and intuitive alternative to touchscreen sub-menus or physical buttons. A big floating centre console, starter button angled towards the driver, and rotary shift-by-wire drive controller nicely positioned, completes the look. Below the console is a big storage tray. Oddments space is excellent, the best here.

The seats are slim, handsome and comfortable, trimmed in black suede and white vegan-leather bolsters. On our top-spec GT-Line S, the front chairs are also ventilated, heated and have electric lumbar adjustment. At almost £52,000 as tested, this is not a cheap car (prices start at £40,945) but, inside it looks 50-grand special, ►



Cars from the future; glasses held together by gaffer tape



Same platform as Ioniq 5, but longer overall and lower

**THE EV6 IS A STRIKING VEHICLE, BEARING MORE THAN A PASSING RESEMBLANCE TO JAGUAR'S COMELY i-PACE**



Bold Kia doesn't just look fast. The new challenger is fast





‘And it’s the ID.4 by a nose as they streak onto the banking...’



Fresh, original and the classiest cabin of the three



No fumes (but also no pedestrians)

complemented by an excellent (British) Meridian sound system. You’ll need to spend another £15,000 to climb onto the i-Pace ladder, although a Tesla Model 3 is similarly priced and is certainly a tempting alternative.

Our drive reveals a car that rides well, steers sharply – especially in Sport mode – and corners assuredly. There’s little bodyroll, a corollary of that big battery sited low under the floor, and suspension that’s firmer than the Ioniq 5’s (springs are stiffer, anti-roll bars thicker and dampers firmer). The wheelbase is shorter, too, to aid agility. It hustles along well, fast and confident and sure-footed, and it copes fluently with some sharply undulated roads we find in Suffolk and northern Essex. And it’s fast: 0-62mph in just a touch over 5.0sec.

There are three driving modes, easily accessed by a button on the steering wheel; think of it as an EV6 *manettino*. Scroll through the settings – Eco, Normal and Sport – and watch the range dip but the responses sharpen. In Sport, the instrument cluster is tinged red, and instead of an eco-efficiency display you get a torque read-out. In fact, on most roads Normal is the better mode. The steering is less snatchy.

Claimed range is 300 miles, but even on a full charge we start on just over 290. It zings along swiftly enough in Eco mode. Scroll through to Sport and take 20 miles or so off the range. Our test car is an all-wheel-drive dual-motor model, though rear-drive single-motor

THERE ARE PRECIOUS FEW DYNAMIC SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE CLASSIC PONY CAR AND ITS ELECTRIC NAMESAKE

versions of all trim levels are offered too: performance suffers, the range benefits (up to 328 miles).

The AWD model uses a 226bhp rear motor and 99bhp front motor. Combine the torque of the two and you get 446lb ft, the meatiest of this trio. The Kia feels the fastest, too, and is over a second quicker to 62mph. But does it feel sporty? Is it fun to drive? Not really. It’s fast and composed and sure-footed but, as with all electric cars, the driving smiles are hindered by the car’s sheer bulk – almost 2.1 tonnes, including half a tonne of lithium-ion batteries. The steering is sharp and precise, but lifeless.

Rather, driving enjoyment comes from the novelty of the EV experience. That instant wham-bang torque can entertain. There’s pleasure, too, in maximising range by careful and sympathetic driving, or so I find. Later, on a particularly challenging B-road just inland from Harwich – some sweeping corners, some hairpins, some dips – we also enjoy the paddle ‘shifts’ to vary the regenerative braking. More regen for tight corners like a downshift; less regen for fast sweepers, like using a high gear for maximum cornering speed.

The biggest criticism of driving an EV is that there is less driver interaction. It’s a valid criticism. The paddle ‘shifts’ provide an extra layer of interactivity. The Kia is the only car here that offers it.

The Kia arrives in Harwich on a cold, bright but wind-swept late October day. The Mustang has come from Northampton, the ID.4 from editor-in-chief McNamara’s home in St Albans. Both stop at Gridserve’s Braintree facility in Essex on the way, to enjoy some high-powered charging, before wending their way east to Harwich.

Let’s try the ID.4. The GTX is supposedly the electric GTI, and to give it suitable oomph they’ve fitted twin e-motors for a combined output of 295bhp – about 30bhp shy of the Kia’s. As the Volkswagen is also heavier, by well ▶



SECOND OPINION PHIL McNAMARA

Manually operated braking modes are one way to boost engagement. But not in the VW or Ford: okay, both offer the chance to turn up the regenerative braking, but it’s mild in the ID.4 and not much stronger in the Mach-E. The EV6 does this best, with four braking modes activated by wheel-mounted paddles. I’d prefer the ‘one-pedal’ action to be more aggressive, throwing more weight onto the nose to aid turn-in. More engagement can come from enhanced interior sound. Again VW fails to deliver, the Mach-E’s Untamed mode is subtle, and the Kia offers the most pervasive sci-fi ‘engine’ sound.

PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING | KIA EV6 AWD

- **Why is it here?** The EV6 is the first Kia designed as an electric car and is Kia’s first use of the E-GMP architecture (for Electric Global Modular Platform), as seen beneath Hyundai’s Ioniq 5. Eleven new Kia EVs are planned by 2026. Kia already has a good EV reputation, thanks mostly to the e-Niro, but the 6 is a more serious effort.
- **Any clever stuff?** It’s a state-of-the-art electric

car. Claimed charging time from 10 to 80 per cent is just 18 minutes, using an ultra-fast 350kW charger (if you can find one). That’s quicker than you can recharge a Tesla Model 3, the industry benchmark, helped by its 800-volt system, following the lead of the Porsche Taycan. That’s double the EV norm. It not only gives faster charging, it also cuts weight and reduces heat. Also clever is its vehicle-to-load (V2L) function (pictured), which

uses a three-pin plug (under the rear seat) to provide mobile charging, perfect for camping. It can even charge another EV.

► **Which version is this?** The top-of-the range GT-Line S AWD. There are three trim levels and a choice of rear- or all-wheel-drive. The RWD models give a better range – up to 328 miles claimed – while the dual-motor AWDs accelerate harder. The entry-level Air (£40,945) is well

equipped, with nav-based smart cruise control. The GT-Line S, as tested, gets 20-inch wheels, pop-out door handles and Meridian premium sound.







Kia designers didn't go the full Tesla, opting to keep a vestigial grille

THE VW FEELS A CHEAPER CAR INSIDE THAN THE KIA, WITH NONE OF THE EV6'S DISTINCTIVE SHAPES, TEXTURES OR TRIM



SECOND OPINION COLIN OVERLAND

The key fact uniting the EV6, Mach-E and ID.4 is that they all ride on bespoke EV platforms, rather than being internal-combustion designs with the engine taken out and a battery pack and e-motor put in. So there are no intrusions from redundant or repurposed transmission tunnels, giving excellent legroom for two or three in the back. The boots are big, too. The passengers also, in all three cases, get comfortable seats (aided by high-profile tyres on the Ford) and the calm that comes from the absence of engine.

over 100kg, it doesn't have quite the kick of the Kia. The suspension is firmer than on the normal ID.4, the steering sharper. There are three main driving modes, as with the Kia, and the difference between Eco, Comfort and Sport is pronounced. In Comfort it's woolly and sloppy on challenging roads, and in no way a GTI (or a GTX). Choose Sport, and you begin to justify the badge. Hustle it down a twisting B-road and it turns-in sweetly, it's nicely composed and corners tidily. It's smaller than the other two cars, and feels it. On the right road, on the right surface, it can entertain. Want to experiment a bit more with the steering and ride combination? Then choose Individual mode, to mix and match. Ride is more unsettled than on the Kia. As with all ID cars, it gets choppy over bumps and fidgets on uneven roads. Most EVs suffer similarly – blame the difficulty of taming all that weight (2224kg in the ID.4 GTX, barely 50kg less than a Land Rover Discovery). The GTX is a handsome car, with its smooth lines. As with the Kia, overhangs are short, the roof low for a crossover, and the body sides deep. Yet its style is more mainstream than the EV6, and few people look at it. The Volkswagen feels a cheaper car inside than the Kia, with none of the distinctive shapes, textures or trims that distinguish the EV6. It will feel familiar to Golf owners but there's none of the *Tomorrow's World* cabin boldness brandished by the EV6 or any Tesla – or the Mustang. The rear seat is spacious, though not as roomy as the EV6's. The touchscreen is significantly less intuitive and looks less special. Response time is also slower, the menus more confused. Once or twice it just froze. The whole system still seems a bit plodding, a feeling amplified at the end of our test – back at Gridserve in Braintree – when the ID.4 was easily the slowest to



A forecourt full of chargers that work. Rest of the country can only dream



Smart cabin, but VW's current infotainment remains fiddly

charge. (Half as fast as the EV6 on a 350kW charger, and 50 per cent slower than the Mustang.) Real-world range was almost identical to the Kia – 238 miles versus 231 – while the Mustang trailed with 230, albeit with a smaller-capacity battery. (The Mach-E scored the best energy consumption figure, at 3.3 miles/kWh, marginally ahead of the Volkswagen and Kia.) Which brings us onto the Mustang. Our test car was the Standard Range Rear-Drive model, although I'm also familiar with the pricier Extended Range AWD. The entry level model, as tested (£41,330) is the best value, and probably the pick of the range. AWD gets twin e-motors and more acceleration, but a poorer range. The rear-drive car also feels like a 'real' Mustang, although there are ►

PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING | FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

► **Why is it here?** The Mustang is the first Ford designed from the outset to be an EV, and it's a good first attempt, however you feel about the use of the hallowed Mustang badge. Instead of a V8 under the bonnet, you'll find a tiny 'frunk' full of charging cables. Yet the Mach-E combines a practical crossover body with strong performance, decent range, and a Silicon Valley-cool cabin that is like no Ford you've seen before.

► **Any clever stuff?** The styling certainly turns heads, and the touchscreen-dominated cabin gets appreciative nods. Order the Extended Range RWD model and you also get a terrific (for an electric car) range of 379 miles. Talking points include the tiny door handles and electric button openers, and the unusually named drive modes – Whisper, Active and Untamed. They vary vehicle responsiveness and can also

vary the soundtrack. Sadly no mode sounds like an old-school V8 Mustang at big revs. ► **Which version is this?** We're testing the Standard Range Rear-Wheel Drive, the entry-level model and the best value, too. It's well equipped – heated driver and passenger seats, attractive quilted upholstery, adaptive cruise control, wireless charging pad and much more. You can order all-wheel drive and also

Extended Range versions using a 88kWh battery – good for 379 miles if you stick with RWD. Order the range-topping GT and you'll be spending £70k.







While Mach-E struggles to resemble a Mustang, EV6 echoes Jag's i-Pace



No apps required at Gridserve if you want to keep it simple and go contactless

MUSTANG STYLING CUES INCLUDE THE LONG BONNET, HOUSING CHARGING CABLES

precious few dynamic similarities between the classic Pony car and its electric namesake.

The Mustang styling cues include the long bonnet – unnecessary as it houses charging cables, not a thundering 5.0-litre V8. It helps make the Mustang longer than the EV6 but also smaller inside. There's the prominent front Mustang motif in the grille (there is no blue oval Ford badge in sight), and the Mustang-esque hips and tail-end treatment including tail lights and a hint of fastback. It looks distinctive, and people stop and ask about it. It's a car of character, if not beauty.

Inside, the cabin is dominated by a big vertical 15.5-inch touchscreen in the centre of the dash. It gives the whole cabin a touch of tech cool. Its graphics, style and intuitiveness are to the Apple (or Tesla) standard. The graphics and information on the map setting, for example, are outstanding. Ford's first electric car may have trailed Volkswagen by a few years, but it feels a generation ahead of any VW in its connectivity. Radio volume is controlled by an alloy knurled knob at the base of the screen. Also welcome is the slimline digital instrument cluster in front of the driver, displaying speed and range. The cabin is not as classy as the Kia's, though, and nor is it as imaginatively styled.

The Mustang drives well enough, and in some ways is surprisingly good for a two-tonne crossover. It's designed more for American interstates than British B-roads so it loses its composure if pushed hard. The Kia is more settled, more assured; the ID.4 GTX more entertaining and agile. The steering can also feel a bit old-school-American-car vague. But it's not bad. On the motorway or an A-road, the more likely environment, it's quiet and comfortable.

All three are excellent motorway cars. All three would be fine entrées to the world of EV ownership. But, as always, there can only be one winner. ►



ID.4 GTX is hard to categorise, but definitely roomy

PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING | VOLKSWAGEN ID.4 GTX

► **Why is it here?**  
It's the first performance GTX version of Volkswagen's ID electric car family. VW will cheerfully tell you it accelerates harder than a Golf GTI, so the Wolfsburgs see it as a sort of EV GTI. As a sign of the times, the first GTX is a 'hot' crossover not a 'hot' hatch. The ID.4, of course, is the crossover or SUV version of VW's acclaimed ID.3.

► **Any clever stuff?**  
If you buy an electric car mostly

for its light environmental footprint, this is a pretty compelling buy. VW claims the Zwickau factory in Germany, where the ID.4 and ID.3 are produced, is powered by climate-neutral renewable power and that all suppliers also use renewable energy. Where this is not possible, VW will offset emissions. The upshot is that all ID.4s (and ID.3s) are certified 'net climate neutral' – including manufacturing process, supply

chain and all logistics – by an independent German body.

► **Which version is this?**  
The GTX comes in two versions, the normal GTX (as tested) and a more luxuriously equipped GTX Max, with 12-way adjustable front seats that can heat and massage and offer pneumatic lumbar support, a panoramic sunroof, and more. The GTX is the only ID.4 to get two e-motors to provide all-wheel drive. The

normal ID.4 is essentially the same car – minus one e-motor and with a less sporty chassis. Prices for the non-GTX ID.4 start at under £35,000.



Harwich Harbour shown actual size on Mach-E screen



KIA EV6 & RIVALS THE DETAILS

KIA EV6  
GT-LINE S AWD



FORD MUSTANG MACH-E  
RWD STANDARD RANGE



VOLKSWAGEN  
ID.4 GTX



	<b>AFFORDABILITY</b>			
<b>WE SAY...</b>				
The Mach-E is the cheapest car here but even this most basic Mustang is well equipped	<b>£47,445</b> (£51,945 as tested) <b>Representative PCP</b> £787 (37 payments), £5.2k deposit, 10,000 miles per year, 4.9% APR <b>Typical approved used value</b> n/a (too new)	<b>£41,330</b> (£41,330 as tested) <b>Representative PCP</b> £533 (48 payments), £4.1k deposit, 10,000 miles per year, 4.9% APR <b>Typical approved used value</b> n/a (too new)	<b>£48,525</b> (£50,350 as tested) <b>Representative PCP</b> £615 (47 payments), £4.9k deposit, 10,000 miles per year, 4.7% APR <b>Typical approved used value</b> n/a (too new)	

	<b>POWERTRAIN</b>			
<b>WE SAY...</b>				
Move up to a two-motor Mach-E and it's still cheapest	Twin electric motors, 77kWh lithium-ion polymer battery, single-speed transmission, all-wheel drive	Single electric motor, 68kWh lithium-ion polymer battery, single-speed transmission, rear-wheel drive	Twin electric motors, 77kWh lithium-ion polymer battery, single-speed transmission, all-wheel drive	

	<b>PERFORMANCE</b>			
<b>WE SAY...</b>				
Only a £70k Mach-E could outspurt the EV6	<b>Power</b> 321bhp <b>Torque</b> 446lb ft <b>Top speed</b> 114mph <b>0-62mph</b> 5.2sec	<b>Power</b> 265bhp <b>Torque</b> 317lb ft <b>Top speed</b> 111mph <b>0-62mph</b> 6.9sec	<b>Power</b> 295bhp <b>Torque</b> 348lb ft <b>Top speed</b> 112mph <b>0-62mph</b> 6.2sec	

	<b>BODY/CHASSIS</b>			
<b>WE SAY...</b>				
Like most EVs, they're all heavyweights. Single-motor Ford just dips under two tonnes	<b>Structure</b> Steel <b>Weight</b> 2090kg <b>Suspension</b> MacPherson struts (front), multi-link (rear) <b>Length/width/height</b> 4695/1890/1550mm <b>Boot capacity</b> 490 litres (+ 20-litre frunk)	<b>Structure</b> Steel <b>Weight</b> 1969kg <b>Suspension</b> MacPherson struts (front), multi-link (rear) <b>Length/width/height</b> 4713/1881/1624mm <b>Boot capacity</b> 519 litres (+ 81-litre frunk)	<b>Structure</b> Steel <b>Weight</b> 2224kg <b>Suspension</b> MacPherson struts (front), multi-link (rear) <b>Length/width/height</b> 4584/1852/1637mm <b>Boot capacity</b> 543 litres (no frunk)	

	<b>EFFICIENCY</b>			
<b>WE SAY...</b>				
This Mach-E has smallest battery on test, but best efficiency, so range figures are close	<b>Official consumption</b> 3.5 miles per kWh <b>Tested consumption</b> 3.0 miles per kWh <b>Official range</b> 300 miles <b>Tested range</b> 231 miles <b>Emissions</b> 0g/km CO2	<b>Official consumption</b> 3.6 miles per kWh <b>Tested consumption</b> 3.3 miles per kWh <b>Official range</b> 273 miles <b>Tested range</b> 230 miles <b>Emissions</b> 0g/km CO2	<b>Official consumption</b> 3.7 miles per kWh <b>Tested consumption</b> 3.1 miles per kWh <b>Official range</b> 301 miles <b>Tested range</b> 238 miles <b>Emissions</b> 0g/km CO2	



FINAL RECKONING

# WE DIDN'T SEE THIS COMING...

So often Giant Test verdicts involve heated debate. Not this time. There's a clear winner. The Kia.

It drives the best, has the classiest cabin and the most advanced electronics, and is the most comfortable on broken B-roads or smooth motorways. It's a striking looking car and shows the many upsides of EV ownership, not least a cabin that's outstandingly space-efficient.

Fast charging offered by its 800-volt architecture also offers clear practical advantages. You can supposedly charge it, on a 350kW charger, in just 18 minutes from 10 to 80 per cent. Mind you, it took us twice as long at Gridserve in Braintree. And 18 minutes is still about five times slower than refuelling a petrol car.

The EV6 is further evidence that the Koreans have, more successfully than most car makers, navigated the

treacherous path from hardware-dominated mechanical engineering to software-dependent electronics. On top of the impressive Ioniq 5, here is another electric car that's right up there with the very best. The only disappointment is that, despite its power and poise, it still isn't much fun to drive. But then none of these cars is.

The GTX is more entertaining and composed on challenging roads than the Mustang, and just as comfortable and assured on dual carriageways. It's smaller and more space-efficient, its style is tidier if less distinctive. But it doesn't feel like a sports machine, let alone a proper GTI. A standard Golf is still more engaging to drive, the Golf GTI on a different planet. By comparison, the EV6 is more composed at speed, and rides better.

If you want a sporty SUV or crossover, look elsewhere. If you're after a brisk and capable mid-size crossover EV, there's much to commend the ID.4. But save £15k and buy a 'normal' ID.4 and forget the GTI/GTX pretence.

So, after some debate, we're handing the silver medal to the Mustang. It's a flawed car, but it's also a car of character. In key areas, it's also a more convincing EV than the VW, from its more intuitive controls to its faster infotainment response times. Spend a bit more and go for the Extended Range version and you can also get Tesla-beating range.

So, a Kia beats a Mustang to the top step. As another US legend once said, the times, they are a-changing. **car**

- 1st

KIA EV6

Another impressive Korean EV following the Ioniq 5, and a clear winner here
- 2nd

FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

Forget tyre-smokin' V8s – the Mustang has morphed into a surprisingly good electric crossover
- 3rd

VOLKSWAGEN ID.4 GTX

A highly capable electric car, but far from a battery-powered GTI



K I A I N car



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