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October 20, 2002

The Sunday Times

Toyota smashes fuel economy record
by ray hutton



Tucked away on the Toyota stand you will find a cheeky little coupé that looks sporty but whose raison d'être is fuel economy, the lowest exhaust emissions and ease of recycling. The ES3 — the initials stand for Eco Spirit — achieves 104mpg in the official European fuel consumption tests, a record for a four-seat car.

Some months ago I drove this prototype and not only is it even more economical than the special “3 litre” (three litres of fuel for every 100km travelled, or 94mpg) versions of the Audi A2 and VW Lupo that sell in Germany, but the Toyota is more lively and responsive and would be very acceptable as an everyday car.

The ES3 has a 1.4 litre turbocharged diesel engine and CVT (continuously variable transmission). The engine cuts out when the car stops, automatically and instantly restarting when you touch the accelerator to move off again. Energy that would be lost from braking is used to charge the car's battery, and the body panels are made from biodegradable plastics. You will see more of these things in future Toyotas.