

ZIGWHEELS
NOW ON
ET
NOW
EVERY
THURSDAY
19.30 HRS
CATCH THE HONDA JAZZ
IN ACTION TONIGHT!



PHOTOGRAPHY KUNAL KHADSE

The Swingin' Shuffle

A sweet little car that celebrates breaking convention - much like the form of music it borrows its name from. Sopan Sharma drives the Honda Jazz and returns with changed perceptions about what a hatchback can do, and be

I can never forget the return from my first jazz concert. The thumping basslines, the brush-snare work on the drums, soaring solos and masterful improvisations - all pieces of individual brilliance by themselves - but together, the stuff they made just would not fit within the conventional boundaries of music. Of course, there was a hefty price to be paid to make it to the front row, but the full-of-beans yet mind-bending experience was much more than the ticket's worth.

Quite similar to the Honda Jazz then, right? Yes, the price of the car seemed outrageous when it was launched - and our unrelenting readers complained by bucketfuls. Honda SIEL has made quite a name for itself selling cars that can be banked upon, but surely, Rs 7 lakh to start off was way too much for a hatchback. A couple of hours spent with the car though, and you start feeling good about the big bucks you've just spent on a small car.

Futuristic has been the continuing theme on most new Honda models, and the Jazz continues in the same vein. What is special and unique about the styling however are the unconventional proportions that the car carries, and pulls off with style and aplomb. The tiny hood makes the car look larger than it is, but proportions are taken care of by the rakish windscreen that is almost in line with the bonnet. The creases on the sides are jazzy, to say the least, and the rear end is neat and uncluttered.

Which is all fine, but the real design feature that sets the Jazz apart from its competitors is the large area of glass used. The

benefits are two fold - apart from adding airiness to the cabin, this also allows the interiors of the car to become a part of the design and styling even to an outsider's eyes. Be it the expansive windscreen or the low slung windows, all reveal the Jazz's neat interiors which somehow fit in perfectly with the entire exterior styling of the car. Sweet and smart!

Remember the astonishment when the jazz virtuoso managed to fit in a million notes within that one downbeat? The Jazz stuns you with its flexibility of space in a strikingly similar manner, revealing how skill and wit can be put to use to liberate the sort of space almost unthinkable of in a hatchback. But before we get to the magic seating

“ DOES THE JAZZ ALSO SUFFER FROM THE LACK OF GRUNT LIKE ITS NEW HATCH RIVALS? HARDLY! ”

however, let me describe the view from the driver's seat.

In a short, it is massive. The large windscreen and its interplay with the positioning of the front seats is ingenious, and clearly the designers of this car have paid a lot of attention towards ensuring that the driver's view is not inhibited. While the strong and wide A-pillar makes for a sturdy design, the swanky quarter window at the front makes sure that the driver does not miss the odd pothole or oncoming vehicles from the right.

And then we have the much touted 'magic seats'. At their root is a reworked fuel tank system that has been placed bang under the rear seats, which liberates an amazing

amount of space in the back. These rear seats can be folded over in different ways - the lower part can be folded upwards to create height, or the complete bench can be folded down to go level with the boot, making enough space to accommodate an entire jazz quartet, as Adil would put it.

When news first broke that Honda had purposely built 1.2-litre iVTEC mill for the Indian Jazz, we had our reservations. Would the Jazz also suffer from under-empowerment like the other new hatches?

Hardly! In traditional iVTEC fashion, the engine is revvy and full of energy, and smart valve gimmickry offers the car good driveability in the city too.

We're spoilt silly by the great diesel hatchbacks that have come to inundate our streets, but as far as petrol hatches go the Jazz has to have one of the most competent engines of the lot.

Other mechanicals on the car are at least as competent - the controls are smooth and precise, and definitely deserving an honourable mention is the stunning gearbox. Slick and precise, a large part of the feel-good factor of the car comes from the gear shifting experience. Given that the car has a peaky powerband, you need to use the gearbox quite a lot, and for once that is not a bad thing.

It is not meant to be a corner carver, of course, but the wonderfully weighted steering wheel

offers just enough assistance and feedback to make sure the car goes exactly where you want it to, even if you choose to correct course mid-corner.

Ride quality is supple, and the shock absorbers are very well damped. This translates into the real world as a comfortable ride over all sorts of surfaces, even the expressway concrete. The car does lose its composure a little once subjected to Pune-level potholes though, but through small bumps here and there, the car carries through untroubled.

We still remember the furor that the Jazz caused on our website thanks to its pricing. MRP still takes top reference spot, but as much as we deny it, there's more to a car than just its price.

Aspirations and expectations apart, what exercises most strength over pricing is competition. Which brings me to my question - What else challenges the Jazz? The Hyundai i20 is the closest competitor offering similar performance, space and packaging, but it comes close on the price front too. The Skoda Fabia 1.2 petrol has been discontinued, and even the 1.4 petrol scores over these two only in terms of build quality and potential handling, rendered useless by the underpowered engine.

Unless competition really threatens the Jazz, Honda frankly can demand any price that suits it with no consideration to what the street expects. Those are the rules that the market plays by. And going by the bookings of the Jazz, the fact is set to prove itself - 3,500 cars booked within the first month. Clearly, there are enough who think the car offers good

value for the stuff that it comes with. Just like the form of

ZIGVIEW

Pg3



Scorpio rallies in Brazil!

ZIGVIEW

Pg3



Audi completes a ton

FRESH!

Pg4



Bajaj Discover 100 is go!



1 Doors open nice and wide, offering amazing ingress and egress.

2 While most bits and pieces are borrowed over from the City, the Jazz sports an extremely funky dashboard with lots of cubbyholes and storage places.

3 At 353 litres the Jazz sports one of the largest luggage space available in hatchbacks. The legroom in the Jazz is more than what most sedans offer.



music, the Jazz is an expensive past time, not for the real blue collar sorts, but does offer an equally rich and enriching experience to those who're up for it. Mere mortals like you and me may not be able to afford it, but really, is that the car's fault?



For the complete road test, log on to www.zigwheels.com

SPECIFICATIONS

Honda Jazz

Engine: 1.2-litre iVTEC	Kerb weight: 1055kg
Cylinders: Inline, 4-cylinder	Boot space: 353 litres
Displacement: 1,198cc	Fuel tank capacity: 42 litres
Bore x Stroke: 73mm x 71.58mm	Tyre Size: 175/65 R15
No of valves: 16	Suspension (F/R): McPherson strut, Torsion Beam Axle
Max power: 90PS@6,200rpm	Turning circle: 4.9m
Max torque: 110Nm@4800rpm	Price (ex-showroom Delhi)
Transmission: 5-speed manual	Standard - Rs. 6.98 lakh
Overall length: 3,900mm	Mode - Rs. 7.28 lakh
Overall width: 1,695mm	Active - Rs. 7.33 lakh
Overall height: 1,535mm	

