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REVIEWED: 2011 TOYOTA RUSH

Pothole sized SUV

This stout little car is no rare sight on our roads. Everybody wants an SUV in Dhaka, and while import duties have kept prices beyond belief, smaller cars like these had to fill in the demands of the "Jeep Gari". Often misunderstood for it's appearance, the Rush is not too bad a car and does its job rather well. But when slapped on with a price tag just on the edge of 30 lacs, questions arise.

The roots of this car go back to the famous off-roader Daihatsu Feroza/Rocky. It's successor, the first generation of the Daihatsu Terios, was rebadged and sold as the Toyota Cami; and the second generation as the Toyota Rush, since 2008. It is produced completely by Daihatsu, a subsidiary of Toyota Motor Corporation.

Initially, and prematurely, I hated this car. The shape of an SUV on a chassis that is just about the size of a small hatchback was a rather absurd concept. I would soon find out that the unusual size of the car has a strong purpose of its own. The mini-SUV is a functional city car and are an absolute ease to park.

What changed my impression of it was a review by Top Gear's Jeremy

Clarkson, where he takes it around a forest chased by a cry of hounds and does rather well for a mere 1500cc mini SUV. The Terios in the video is a 4 wheel drive model; the ones available in our market are mostly rear wheel drive, while the rest of the car is the same.

Our test car was a 2011 unit that seats five and is priced at 28 lacs, again from our friends at Car House Limited. It is facelifted, as are the models from 2010 onwards. Dressed with projector headlamps, clear taillights, and a neat little spoiler, it has a decent appearance. Despite the timid looks, the car is completely mechanical throughout, and can take quite the abuse. Interior has basic plastic with chrome bits here and there. It does not feel too bad, especially after the facelift, and the quality didn't seem to bother me at all. Trunk space is quite decent as well, and can be further increased by folding down the passenger seats at the back.

This engine is the same 3SZ-VE unit found in the Passo Sette we reviewed earlier (Shift issue on 13-09-13), paired with a four speed automatic transmission. It feels a bit heavier than the similar Corolla engines, more torque at lower RPMs and a bit raw

overall. They're quite robust and friendly to CNG conversions, although you should be able to do above 8 kms per liter driving sensibly. Weighing in at barely 1200kgs, the small engine does suffice, and should reach 160km/h comfortably. We'd suggest otherwise as the car was not designed to travel at such speeds. Body roll at fast turns is a definite given, just like any other car of this size would have.

The ride isn't that comfortable. Naturally, with a light-weight body and a stiff suspension, the car tends to be a bit bumpy over potholes. The advantages are greater though, with big 16 inch wheels and tires, good ground clearance and a rotating axle, you can take it to just about any bit of broken, disaster ridden road without getting wedged to the ground or breaking your shocks. It makes for a fun experience, driving over all sorts of hurdles without a care in the world. The small size of the car makes for good maneuvering in city traffic, you can park it almost anywhere and pop it onto the sidewalk with ease wherever you go.

WORDS AND PHOTOS

AADNAN ZAMAN



Those squishy eyes wont scare off bigger cars like the Corolla. But this tiny, high-riding car is great for looking over kilometers of rush hour traffic.

Kei Who?!

The Toyota Rush isn't exactly a Kei car, it's a Mini-SUV. What is a Kei car, then?

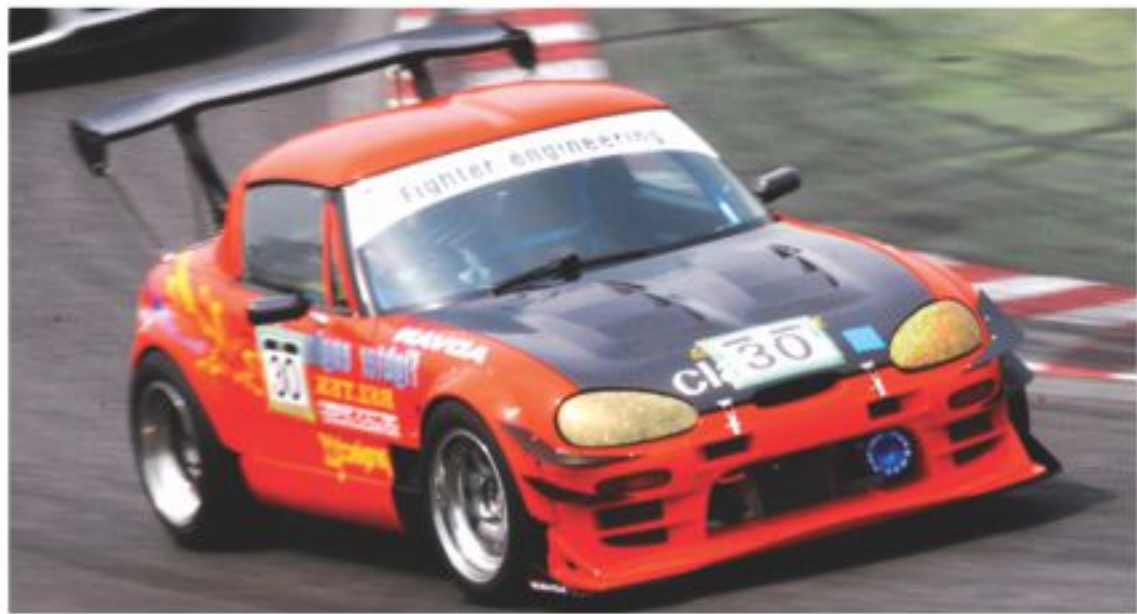
3.4 meters in length, 1.48 meters width, 2 meters height, and a cap of 660cc on engine displacement. If the car falls under those restrictions, it is categorized as a Kei-car in Japan, and is liable to receive lower taxes and a much lower insurance bracket.

Devised as a solution for Japan's crippling traffic problems in major cities, the Kei-car's cub-sized presence makes them popular as a daily driver. They tend to be efficient, take less space to park, and are fun to zoom around in if they have even a slightly potent engine (like the Autozam AZ1, Suzuki Cappucino, etc). Don't take them out on the highway, though, it happens to be a seriously scary experience.

The Rush is a mini-SUV, the Kei version of regular SUVs. The last generation Daihatsu Terios Kid, was a kei-version of the regular Terios.

Here's a thought: why don't we have more kei-cars

playing our streets? It would save a lot of the congestion problems, and they'd be cheap and inexpensive to maintain, too. We have a feeling it's the bulging waistlines of the car-buying crowd that limits their interest in kei-cars.



Kei-car race car. Say that fast, several times. The Suzuki Cappucino in action



Rear end makes it look like a turtle. But is it a ninja turtle?



Interior plastics aren't too offensive, and equipment levels are good.

Test Drive: 2002 Mercedes Benz CL500



Fat Cat Rocket

You might not have ever seen this car plying through Dhaka city traffic because its extremely rare and it rarely comes out for a drive. Nestled in the heart of Dhanmondi, broods one of the fastest, meanest, and one of the best looking of all Mercs in the country.

German engineering at its finest, meet the Mercedes CL500 Coupe. To start off, this powerhouse packs a mean 5.0 litre V8 engine equipped, pumping out 302 horsepower and 406 N-m of sheer torque. Let me translate that into simpler terms. It can have almost any car for breakfast, and still have room for two or three Corollas. The car is very, very fast!

Yours truly had the rare privilege to road test the car, and in all honesty I lost my lunch by the time we were done. The amount of raw torque that this car produces makes every step on the paddle a push that shoves you deeper into the plush leather seats. Even though Mercedes and AMG faces criticism from most users complaining about traction problems, this baby with its Active Body Control handles fluidly enough.

When seated in the luxurious cockpit of the coupe, you feel as if you're in a stretched sedan. The aesthetics of the interior will make anyone revel at Mercedes' impeccable attention to detail and finesse. From the hand crafted cherry wood panels to the brightly lit, wide gauges, and a healthy array of buttons, the German car manufacturer spared no expense to guarantee complete drivers' satisfaction. They don't make many cars like these anymore.

However, the feeling of plush romance almost vaporizes the moment you step on the gas. And boy oh boy, does it punch you in the groin! The car reaches 100 km/h in 5.4 seconds flat, and has a limited top speed of 250 km/h. German road regulations should be damned for making car manufacturers limit their cars to 250 km/h. I can't begin to imagine what this car would do if it brought out all the stops. God help the tarmac.

It's a shame though that this car isn't given its rightful place in the streets of Dhaka. It really is like a caged lion, being the king of the jungle, yet in the confines of this concrete zoo. Driving a car like this successfully convinces you that rickshaws really are the work of Satan, them being its greatest road-threat. Despite its Herculean power though, the car rides as quietly as a gentle breeze. You can only hear a soft whisper as it whizzes past you with nothing but a gentle purr. The colossal 16-feet long car surpassingly has little difficulty squeezing through almost impossible gaps in traffic. This is where its magnanimous beauty lies. Weighing in at nearly a ton and a half, packing more horsepower than a Sunday British horse-race, it still has a lot of finesse. The car isn't your usual sports car, no. It won't make you look like a crazed speed junkie. Instead it amplifies your personality in ways much suited to wealthy aficionados, and speaks volumes of its owners' extensive knowledge of cars coupled with exquisite taste. It has suave sophistication underlining its persona. The car has a very real human characteristic. It seems alive, with a

mind of its own.

The car is meant not for crazed teenagers on a Hookah-high, but for grown men who possess enough testosterone to melt asphalt. The car's design too, complements its purpose. The entire car is construed from a single unit, aerodynamically crafted to cut through air like a hot knife through butter. Its iconic four oval headlamps remind one of the golden era in Mercedes designs. This particular unit is outfitted with custom aftermarket 19" AMG alloy rims, with wider tyres at the rear than at the front to make sure none of that torque goes to waste. The car proudly wears a Midnight Blue coat and has black meshed grills covering all of its air flow ducts. The active suspension makes sure that even the roughest roads and the deepest potholes go unnoticed during the drive, and a manual control unit is used to adjust ride-height. Security features include a finger-print operated gear-knob, proximity sensors and automatic vacuum powered door lock systems. However, unlike other sports cars of today, this car isn't bombarded with buttons and controls. The designers kept the tech up front to a minimum, for the enthusiasts.

So there you have it. The Mercedes CL 500 coupe, in all its majesty. Only two were brought into the country, and the other one is sadly out of service. So if you ever see this big cat prowling the streets, you'll know that you're witnessing German engineering at its finest. God bless the land of sausages and sauerkraut.

Owner: Javed Noman  
With special thanks to Rakib Hasan.

WORDS: MOHAMMAD AKIB NAWAZ

PHOTOS: MUSHFIQ ZAMAN

And here's the latest version. The 2010 CL coupe will soon be replaced, though. Character will remain the same, with just more tech.



Acres of rosy wood trim and many, many buttons.



Many cows died gratefully to make the swathe of leather in this interior.

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