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TEST DRIVE

CRZ

2013 Honda CRZ

I was keen on getting the CRZ out for a review. But every planned outing saw huge downpours where my photographers were lost like wet sheep. And I wasn't planning to shoot this time, just drive. So what to do? Just pick a day and go out saving the planet with frugality while looking cool at the same time. At least, that's what the CRZ initially promised.

The CRZ has the same underpinnings as the Insight and the Fit/Jazz. This is a sporty hybrid. Wait, don't let that 'hybrid' badge turn you away. This car could make you smile every time you drive it. It has a zippy engine coupled with a fuel

borrows heavily on that theme as well as cues in the styling department. See the low nose and a sharply stubby tail? CRX genes.

In current Honda fashion the interior sports a two tier display with a central tachometer. It's all cool spaceship lights and dials here. I love the way everything looks techy and colorful without being kitschy. Visibility out the rear is good with the help of that glass window in the tailgate. Where the original had thin pillars creating the impression of a larger interior that it was, the new car has thicker pillars for safety reasons that reduce that 'openness' a little. Some might call it

long drive, don't expect those friends to remain on your Facebook friend list for long. Fold down those rear seats and you have more cargo space.

The car has a stop-start function that cuts off the engine when cruising or rolling to a stop in ECO mode. The eco mode suggest you keep the tachometer lights in the green. It changes color as to how you use or abuse it. Press it hard, it starts going blue. Like the world is holding its breath cause you're using up all the petroleum.

But the electric motor isn't your typical hybrid setup. The primary output is always from the engine. The electricity butts in occasionally cause

SPECS

2013 Honda CRZ

Engine: 1.5 liter SOHC LEA 4 cylinder engine (122 hp@6000 RPM, 123 lb-ft torque@2000 RPM)
Electric: DC brushless motor MF6 Model (14 hp@1500 RPM, 58 lb-ft torque@1000 RPM)

VERDICT

This car has a nimble characteristic that you don't get in most other cars. I don't for a single minute wish I was in something faster. With the right roads, this can be a truly fun car. It's not blazingly fast, but it is quick and very agile. And it does all that without burning a hole in your wallet at the pumps. It's easy to see out of and it looks like nothing else on the road. Based on the original CRX, the styling is something that will age very well.

I like small cars. But not if they present themselves as a boring toaster with only one-way functionality like most cars I see every day. I like small cars with character, style and purpose. This small hybrid trumps all that. The CRZ is different and different in a sea of toasters is good.

WORDS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM



Interior is modern, funky, typically Honda.
Rear leg-room isn't enough.



Gearbox: CVT automatic gearbox, front wheel drive
Curb weight: 1236 kg as tested
Brakes: Ventilated front disc, solid rear disc brakes.
Wheels: 195/55R16 size wheels.

Price: 35 lakh taka as tested. For details and stock availability, contact DHS Motors Ltd.

Gene play – X and Z

The retro styling bug bit the world sometime around the mid-2000s. Spurred on by the success of the Ford GT, a modern mimicry of the original, iconic GT40, the US led the charge of retro styled machines. Dodge, Chevrolet, Ford, all played around with the romantic notion of bringing back the heyday of the 70's muscle car mania.

Others followed, but with less mainstream success. Only a handful of manufacturers attempted to get into the retro styling scene, and the Nissan 350Z, a modern interpretation of the original Fairlady Z, stood out. In recent times, Nissan lay out a series of concept cars based on the sparkling

period of Nissan's history from the 70's, with the IDX concepts.

Now, its all modern reinterpretation. While the Americans continue to unabashedly ape their forefathers in terms of design, the Japanese are playing a smarter game. They take bits and pieces and piece it together within a modern design language to arrive at a shape that is not instantly familiar, but is appealing. Its almost like a reward system, the manufacturers challenging car geeks and design aficionados to relate the old and the new and find the bits of shared DNA.

Toyota did a brilliant job with the GT-86,



blending old and new in a package that was ultimately newer rather than older. Honda's take on this modern reinterpretation business

came in the form of the CRZ. The name itself is a giveaway in most cases, but it's decidedly more subtle than that. The rear hatch and the slab of glass separating the bottom of the sill and the rear windshield harks back to a shape that many considered to be odd but somehow appealing back in the 90's. The whole character of the CRZ exudes a similar vibe to the CRX, a tribute to a legend.

Why the CRX? The CRX was a street legend more than a sales hit (although sales were through the roof as well). It was the pioneering Honda for street racers worldwide, and on the cracked tarmac of Sylmar, California, legends were made or

broken on whether modified CRXs could keep up with muscle cars or not. It was the birth of a car culture that would survive decades, with domestic-import rivalries springing up, slow legalization of drag racing, and sub-10 second quarter mile runs from Hondas with tiny engines.

While the CRZ is far removed from the street drag racing stardom which shot the CRX to fame, it's a fitting tribute, and a way of looking to the future. It's Honda's way of legitimizing hybrid technology for the masses, making it look cool and hip.

SHAER REAZ

Small size, big brawn

A modern Formula One engine produces 700+ hp from a 1.6 liter engine. When you think of the technology trickling down to road cars from motorsport, the concept of making big power from small displacement engines is probably one of the most significant.

For the Americans, gone are the days of 6000cc V8s producing a little over 150hp. There is a replacement for displacement, as the need for appealing to a larger, more global market are forcing these behemoth engines to be reduced in size. And as far as global American brands go, Ford is right up there at the top.

Ford's operations in Bangladesh started a long time back. Due to a range of market friendly models being introduced into the global Ford lineup, their business is fast picking up.

Take their Ecosport, for example. One of the most eye-catching engine options for the Ecosport min-SUV is the 1.0 liter EcoBoost engine. Currently unavailable in Bangladesh (Ford's dealership in Dhaka confirmed with us that they are looking into bringing the 1.0 to Bangladesh), the 1.0 liter EcoBoost is making waves elsewhere. A tiny 3 cylinder turbocharged unit, the smallest EcoBoost engine generates 123 hp and 148 lb-ft of torque from 1300 to 5300 RPM, surprising figures considering the fact that the engine's cylinder head assembly can fit on a regular A4 sized piece of paper. And guess what? The displacement to power ratio is the same as the Bugatti Veyron, and it has the highest torque per liter figures of any engine in Ford's lineup ever made.

What are the benefits of tiny engines with good power figures? Besides the low fuel costs and less emissions, a smaller engine can yield a low center of gravity for the car which gives it better handling



and stability, reduced proportions for the body for a city car, and further improved front impact zones for safety.

Manufacturers like VW, BMW, Mazda and more have successfully experimented with the concept of small engines producing similar power figures to larger, heavier engines. The Wankel Rotary, the marvel it is, is probably the only alternative to conventional piston power. Almost all of BMW's lineup of small engines are turbocharged, and Volkswagen found a unique mix in its TSi engines, combining a supercharger and turbocharger to reduce low RPM lag usually associated with a small, turbocharged engine. However, Ford's entry into the foray is possibly even more significant, considering the beleaguered US manufacturers are looking for a way out of financial red zones, and small efficient cars for the global market might just be the solution.

Look for a review of the Ford EcoSport in an upcoming issue of Shift.

Dhaka Motorbike Show 2014

A four-day motorbike show will kick off in Dhaka in September to popularize two-wheelers among city dwellers, who suffer badly from terrible tailbacks on city roads.

"The use of motorbikes will help ease the near-constant traffic gridlock on the city roads, while cost efficiency of the vehicles will attract more users. There is no alternative to motorbikes in Dhaka city as the vehicles are still considered a timesaver and a speedy mode of transport. The fair will also create awareness among people on how to accidents" Abdul Matlub Ahmad, Chairman, Nitol Niloy Group, said at a press conference on "Dhaka Motorbike Show 2014" at The Daily Star Centre.

Bangladesh Event Management Services (BDEMS), organizers of the fair, signed the agreement with Hero Motorcorp as a title sponsor of "Dhaka Motorbike Show-2014" last month. Hero Motorcorp (formerly Hero Honda Motors Ltd.) is the world's largest manufacturer of two wheelers in terms of unit volume sales in calendar year, based in India. In 2001, the company achieved the coveted position and continues to maintain it till date.

Nilangshu Nandi, Country Manager of Hero

MotoCorp, stated, "On behalf of the company, I thank the people of Bangladesh for having shown so much love, affection and faith to the brand. The company is committed to quality products at affordable prices for everybody here. New products will be launched and exciting models will be showcased in the Dhaka Motorbike Show. I welcome you all to the grandest motorbike show in Dhaka."

Bangladesh Event Management Services will organize the show in association with the automobiles assemblers' platform at DITF field, beside Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Companies, including international and local motorbike manufacturers and importers, will participate in the fair, said Syed Raju Ahmed, chief executive officer of the event management company.

Musabbir Ahmad, Managing Director, Niloy Motors said "New bike riders often get confused about which motorcycles they should purchase. We will organize a workshop to help them make a right decision. We will reach out to the people of this country to participate in this show and make it a grand success."