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TEST DRIVE



2016 GREAT WALL HAVAL H6

God made us; "everything" else is made by the Chinese. Despite advancing in everything and beyond, the Chinese somehow struggled in one area- conventional automobiles. Cheap finishing and compromised quality resulted in lagging brand equity and low sales figures for all Chinese automobile brands over the last decade. Things at Great Wall Motors, one of the leading Chinese giants were not very different until recently, the launch of its new crossover SUV, the Haval H6 paving the way to better times. Global reception of the H5 successor has pulled out Great Wall Motors from trouble and we set off to find out why.

First impressions

The Haval H6 is a chunky looking mid-sized SUV with decent ground clearance to tackle our terrain. Climb into the cabin and you'll find the choice of materials used appreciable - there are no hollow sounds when you tap on the dashboard or the door panels. An elegant black color dominates the interior with a few bursts of chrome silver here and there. The seats are perforated leather with electric controls and you'll be cajoled by the cozy lumbar support. Contrasting red stitch is prevalent all over, giving the interior a sporty feel. There are abundant nifty storage compartments for your daily necessities everywhere too. The vehicle is clearly designed for international markets as the head room and leg room suggests, both in the front and rear for five comfortable passengers.

Lot of features to play with

The Haval H6 has been endowed with technology its predecessors have never heard of. To start with, there are proximity sensors all over with a front left fender blind spot cured by video coverage. Cruise control, dual zone automatic air conditioning, surround airbags and auto dimming anti glare rear view mirrors come standard. There is a Bluetooth hands free system and 6 speaker stereo system which can be controlled through steering mounted controls. A basic twin gauge instrument cluster with tire



pressure indicator and the mandatory 7" display with rear view camera features will make life a tad bit easier in the hectic Dhaka traffic.

How is it to drive the thing?

A mid-sized SUV calls for a medium sized drivetrain but Great Wall surprised us with a 1.5 liter horizontally mounted motor, which will reward you the minimum tax structure in Bangladesh. So how does a 1.5 liter petrol motor pull this SUV? A turbo attached with the 1.5 liter motor leads to around 147 hp and 155 lb-ft of torque, which is enough to haul a loaded H6. On top of that, there is a six speed manual transmission, with a soft feel clutch and buttery shifter. The transmission gives you a controlled power delivery with brilliant efficiency, as you can quickly get into higher gears and cruise along at a lower engine speed. Although the Haval H6 is quick at higher RPMs, the torque-play is relatively low at lower RPMs, when you will have to shift down to lower gears to lurch the vehicle forth. The suspension and steering setup gives the SUV a great handling characteristic - goes over bumps and lumps at ease and body roll is well contained. I threw the H6 at



corners in a barren wasteland littered with rock and sand and it was the most fun I had in a week. Got to mention, Ace Autos bring in two versions of the Haval H6- a FWD and an on-demand 4WD version that engages all four wheels when required. And our test mule was the latter model. The brakes are soft, and a combination of front and rear discs along with ABS and ESP with this SUV is impressive, giving you peace of mind.

Final thoughts

The amount of options and tech bits in the Haval H6 places it in an uncanny position against pricey rivals such as the Honda CRV, Toyota RAV4 and Nissan X-Trail. The 1.5 liter motor also gives it an added advantage of lower tax structure. The hefty space and comfy ride, regardless of being a passenger or a driver will make you change your perception of Chinese automobile brands, especially when the build quality is noteworthy.

WORDS: MAHBUB HUSSAIN
PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM

SPECS:

2016 Great Wall Haval H6

Engine: 1.5 litre 4G15B 4-cylinder gasoline engine (147hp, 155lb-ft of torque).

Transmission: 6 speed manual.

Brakes: Ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, ABS, EBD, ESP, brake assist.

Suspension: MacPherson independent front, independent rear with cross arm and torsion bar.

Features and options: 6 airbags, Sunroof, keyless entry, dual zone climate control, 7 inch touch screen infotainment system, 6 speakers, CD, DVD, USB, auxiliary port, power outlet, Bluetooth connectivity, steering mounted audio controls, cruise control, reverse camera, parking and proximity sensors, multi-function rear view mirror, auto defogging, 17 inch alloy wheels.

Price: 26 lakh (4WD), 24 lakh (2WD).

For details, contact Ace Autos.

COLLECTIBLES



Custom Hako

The Hakosuka is the soon to be unattainable Japanese myth, stored away in safes for fear of getting dirty. Scale model collectors on the other hand can get one for very little money. Which is why we can go bonkers on customising them in ways many would consider blasphemous.

What you see here is a 30 minute attempt at making Hako replete with JDM themed car culture icons. Matt camp paint, the ubiquitous rising star and slammed stance. More such work is regularly done by customisers who are members of DCCCB. Last week there was a JDM build-off to share ideas and tricks. We're out of space here. But come online to see it all.



WORDS & PHOTOS: E.R. RONNY

ARE CARS GETTING UGLIER?

I remember the first time I saw a Toyota Altezza, export models labeled IS200/300 with a Lexus badge, quite clearly. The year was 2003 and the early years of a car culture dominated by hideous bodykits and garish spoilers on Toyota Corollas and Corsas culminated in the F1 auto show, held on the Gulshan Youth Club grounds. Among the loud and obnoxious "modified" family sedans, 11 year old me spied a gorgeously raked, impossibly handsome and taut shape. It stood out without trying too hard, with the right balance of elegance and sportiness.

The first generation Altezza/IS is still handsome and modern even today. When the second generation came out, it was designed for the European and American markets as a clear contender to the German throne dominated by BMW, Mercedes and Audi. It was sleek, fundamentally sound in design and function, and the world loved the IS-F's aggressiveness. It was bold, and for the Japanese, quite revolutionary in the way it aimed squarely at the BMW M3, Benz C63 AMG, Audi RS4 and actually survived.



In 2013, the Lexus IS was yet again revised in terms of styling, progressive thinking by the design team yielding a hyper modern, alien-spaceship influenced front and rear. The front had a radical new hourglass grille and the headlights were slashes of crystal, the Daytime Running Lights separated from the headlights and serving as a separate attraction. At the rear, the taillights seemed to have melted under all the pressure of competing with Germans in the luxury car market. It was all very messy, but apparently it sold well.

Now, in 2016, Lexus has brought out a monstrosity they are calling the new IS, which, apart from a new front end, looks



exactly the same as the previous gen. Unveiled at the Beijing Auto Show, where the design of the fourth generation IS goes horribly wrong is at the front, which has no semblance of flow, very little coherence and no discernible anchor points to which the different elements gravitate towards. The bumper cutouts are droopy and seem to want to get away from that hideous grille, jutting sideways and outward, leaving a wide expanse between the headlight and the front edge of the bumper. The designers attempted to cover up this point-less exercise with a set of slim DRLs but that surface might as well serve as a runway for Airbus' new range of widebody

planes, the A350 XWB.

"The new grille folds back at a higher point, changing its top and bottom proportions that enhance its sporty feel with a visually lower center of gravity, while blending effortlessly into the reshaped hood", spouts the official Lexus PR machine, attempting to cover up the fact that the new IS front has the sleekness of a 1960's Bedford truck.

There is no doubt that the IS will sell well in certain parts of the world. It represents the flashy attitudes of post 2010 teens and tweens, and when it's time for their families to get a car, opinions will be swayed and wallets will be cracked open. Like the music industry's dive into the depths of mediocrity in recent years, automotive designers have stopped listening to the beat of the consumers and started enforcing a beat of their own. Automotive design, pure and true, is certainly on its way to the grave, then. At least at Lexus it is.

SHAER REAZ

