

SHIFT

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TEST DRIVE

2017 HAVAL H6



The Chinese are great at many things. China is basically a Business Process Outsourcing startup posing as a country with one party rule, exploiting cheap labour for decades to produce every last imaginable thing on the planet. From phones to motorbikes to toys and cheap knock-offs, they've managed to dominate global manufacturing in every industry, except one – cars. Until now.

Recent years have seen a huge surge in the quality, price point competitiveness and overall performance of Chinese cars, from both domestic and export brands. Part of that comes from buying out established European manufacturers, as Geely did with Volvo – others resort to poaching the best designers and engineers that Europe has to offer. That's exactly what Great Wall did.

Exported models now officially branded Haval. Great Wall has come a long way from the days of making basic, bare-bones but surprisingly capable pickups. With the ex-head of design at BMW on their payroll, their latest range has taken on a Germanic feel, backed up by significantly refined drivetrain and upscale electronic goodies. The most striking of the lot is the all new H6 Coupe, infused with a bunch of equipment that you'd honestly be surprised by when you meet it for the first time.

The H6 Coupe is Haval's rendition of what a mid-size sporty crossover would be if the Chinese ran the world. The design has elements of Audi, Range Rover, BMW and Mazda - the result is striking, with taut proportions, a sharply raked-back roof, floating pillars and nice proportions. It'll definitely turn heads because people will be confused trying to figure out what you're driving. Stylishly in-your face daytime running lights and an impressively sleek snout gives it a

ton of presence.

Things are much better on the performance front. The 2.0 litre turbocharged Direct Injection 4 cylinder motor puts out 194 HP and 232 lb-ft torque, which gives the H6 a decided spring in its step with help from the 6-speed Getrag dual clutch automatic. Response could be a little better but overall the dynamics of the torque engine is up there with the best that the Japs can offer. Even though it's front wheel drive, the H6 shines off-road as well, finding enough grunt and grip in nearly all kinds of terrain. It even comes with Hill Start Assist and Hill Descent Control, alongside the typical Brake Assist, ESP, Traction Control and electronic Tyre Pressure Monitoring System. Smaller wheels would make it a much more fun experience in the dirt – it's not that the H6 has a particularly harsh ride but the big and admittedly good looking 19 inch wheels do nothing to dampen the mid-size SUV any further.

Not that you'd be complaining much sitting inside the nicely padded, semi-luxurious interior of the H6. That sleek roofline houses a panoramic roof that extends all the way above the rear passengers' headrests and opens halfway with tilt and slide options. Faux leather on the (front power) seats and multifunction wheel give it a touch of class, and while the plastics could be a bit better for the segment the H6 is competing in, there are absolutely no complaints about the ergonomic, modern layout of the dash. The rear gets centrally placed air-conditioning vents, while the front gets dual zone climate control and a 7-inch entertainment system that switches to a kerbside camera beneath the left mirror when needed, conveniently eliminating one of the biggest blind spots on the car. An array

What does the boss think?

Acceleration is surprisingly brisk. Enough to get you smiling. Could be because you don't expect a new brand called Haval to be this fluid. The traction control is not something you really want to bother turning off but if you want to floor it and watch dust clouds form, this will definitely do it, at least initially as the "switched off" traction control still secretly tries to reign you in. On paved roads, it usually refuses to break loose no matter how much you floor it, courtesy of the nanny-ing traction control. But do you really want to hoon around in this? No. You're better off flooring the throttle gently and watch the speedo numbers rise. The suspension soaks up the bumps well and on the road, it stays planted for a car of its size. And it IS large. Even though it doesn't look it, its dimensions are similar to the Toyota RAV4 and Honda CRV. One gripe is that the rear window is so small it is nearly impossible to see the world out of it. All for the sake of design. But then there is the well-appointed reverse cam. Would I daily drive it? Heck yeah.

Ehsanur Raza Ronny, Editor of Shift and Maker of Monstrous Dust Clouds and Painter of Nissan Sunnys



of proximity sensors are a useful addition, helping get the H6 out of tight spots. Safety is highly prioritised as well – all directional airbags keep you safe if anything goes wrong.

The H6 is a near-perfect balance of on-road comfort and off-road ability, and considering the typical requirements of SUV users in Bangladesh, it's a fine vehicle in ways that belie its origin from a nation that is still relatively new to car manufacturing. Its rivals are

plentiful and there are benefits to be had from getting a bargain buy such as this – priced at 41 lakh Taka, the H6 is massive value for money compared to its Japanese or South Korean counterparts. However, considering we can't really say much about its reliability and longevity at the moment, it might be prudent to approach the H6 after considering the 2 year (or 50,000 km) bumper to bumper warranty. Other than the question

mark hovering over long-term use, the Haval H6 Coupe does many of the things you ask of it, some of it exceptionally well. It's abundantly clear that the Chinese are on the right track, and they did it in half the time it took for the Koreans while leaving the Indians in a trail of dirt and dust.

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AUTO NEWS

Yet another baby SUV – BMW X2



BMW has created yet another niche in its SUV lineup with an all-new model – the X2. Slotting in between, how did you guess, the X1 and X3, the X2 is what BMW is calling a "Sports Activity Coupe". Equipped with their now signature lineup of small-but-efficient turbo motors and xDrive all-wheel drive (as well as front wheel drive on basic models), the X2 is billed as a drivers' car, both on and off-road.

Based on the MINI Countryman's platform, the X2 is sleeker and lower than other SUVs or

crossovers in BMW's range – with none of the off-road ability being sacrificed. There are two petrol and two diesel motors on offer, although we're likely to be restricted to the FWD 1.5 litre 3 cylinder turbo motor in Bangladesh. We might get the AWD diesel model as well, equipped with a 2.0 litre 4-cylinder.

It's quite the looker as well, with curves in all the right places and a youthful, sunny disposition that's sure to make it a hit with the younger crowd it targets. The grey side-cladding,

which would be considered cheap and distasteful if it was on any other brand, gives it a tough and capable demeanour and tries to tell people it's ready to play in an urban, or otherwise environment.

It's by far the best looking BMW in the X-series, and as a marketing exercise it works miles better than the scarcely believable PR-talk that revolves around the hateful existence of the X4 and X6. We'll make sure to be there to test the X2 when it gets here.

CAR SPOTTING

Rounding off our soft-roader/crossover issue is a bunch of old-school small SUVs. These old timers may not have the fancy butt coolers and hill descent control, but off-road, any of these baby brutes would outshine a modern crossover with a thousand buttons and 65 screens. Plus, the super rare Beijing BJ212 in bright orange has more soul anyway.



PHOTOS: SHADMAN AL SAMEE