

TEST DRIVE

HONDA VEZEL HYBRID



The Vezel is the go-to compact SUV for Bangladesh right now. It's small enough to park in all our congested apartment parking spots. It's tall enough to tackle our monstrous speed breakers and manhole covers with ease. And it is priced right, considering the amount of kit you get.

DESIGN

We've reviewed the standard second generation Vezel before (known as the HR-V in

other markets). It drastically changed from the original egg carton first-gen to a swoopy low-slung estate in high-heeled shoes.

INTERIOR

Our test unit has an excellent combination of interior colours - dark olive green, black and tan. It's a classic colour combo that works on any car. It has one of the biggest trunk spaces in the subcompact crossover class. The interior has plenty of space for the driver, though

very tall people may feel a little claustrophobic in the rear considering the small windows and the roof sloping down towards the back.

The dash is standard Star Trek level of display wizardry. All the climate and seat heater controls are via a neat touch panel. The switchgear is definitely very upmarket and classy with a solid feel in how the buttons operate. The instrument cluster features a neat halo effect that changes to red when

you select Sport mode. What does that do in a hybrid?

PERFORMANCE

There's a 1.5 litre engine paired with an electric motor that gives a combined 150 HP and about 140 lb-ft of torque. That's in comparison to the standard petrol Vezel pumping out 130 HP and 114 lb-ft torque, but in the hybrid Vezel Z the electric motor alone adds 29 HP and 115-118 lb-ft of torque. The 7-speed dual clutch transmission (DCT) comes with paddle shifters if you're in the mood to feel like a race car driver swishing through rickshaws. Initially the acceleration feels slightly sharper than the standard Vezel. When you press Sport, it lets you run the car without a nanny controlling your fuel efficiency. Throttle response is instant courtesy of that DCT sending power to the front wheels.

COMFORT

This is based on the superb Jazz so all the packaging benefits are transplanted here. There's plenty of space for the average height and width of a Bangladeshi. And in this case, I am considering quite a lot of width thanks to *biryani* and no intention of climbing stairs. Saying that, rear seats will accommodate three people but with a bit of elbow and shoulder rubbing. Front seats are heated and apparently a lot of older folk love that for the warmth it provides for aching backs. The ride on the other hand is stiff like the standard Vezel. Body lean is well managed during quick turns but potholes will be felt by everyone. The steering has a decent amount of weight to it but it surprisingly detached from the road. While enthusiasts would want some sort of road feedback, for everyone else, it's great in the city where you just want to point and go.

WHAT ABOUT THAT HYBRID SYSTEM?

It's relatively unobtrusive. It starts with petrol power and quickly brings in the electric motor for assists while cruising or when you need additional power. While you sit in traffic it shuts down while still running your AC and all other lighting and audio equipment. Mileage has been tested as high as 27 km/litre. There are worries about the battery pack that eventually needs replacement. As it turns out, instead of replacing the entire battery, only a few modules that become old and malfunction need replacing. The importers of this particular test car are already working out how to provide the service required several years down the line. And there lies the biggest concern. These new hybrids are quite reliable if you get it almost new and drive it with care. We're still waiting to see how all this turns out as chauffeurs use them like 20 year old Honda Civics.

VERDICT

It looks great and will seat five adults quite easily. The car comes loaded with all the tech you need, especially the top of the line, fully loaded model we tested. It also received a 5 star rating in the NCAP crash test, making it very safe for occupants during an accident. I like the ride although on the terrible, terrible road conditions of Dhaka, I would have preferred a bit more softness. The compact dimensions mean easy maneuverability in traffic. Parts should be relatively available as hundreds of Vezels have already been sold here.

PRICE

This particular 2014 Honda Vezel Z is available at Nippon Auto Trading for a price of TK 31 Lakh.

WORDS: EHSANURRAZA RONNY
PHOTOS: FARHAN AHMED



What does the rest of the team think?

I love Honda and all that the big upright H stands for, so this will be a little biased. One thing is for certain though, and it will be clearly evident to anyone who spends some time with the Vezel or HRV, in petrol or hybrid form - there may be things that its competitors do really well, but where the Honda stands out is in attention to detail. In the materials it has in the interior, the neatly placed interior storage pockets, the ergonomic layout of the dash, the Honda delivers on pretty much every front. The Vezel Z, the hybrid in the range, bumps that up with an added zing in driving dynamics and fuel savings, so what's not to love? The electric motor coming in just as the petrol motor reaches its peak means the acceleration is much improved over the X or S Vezels, but that's a fact that you'll only realize if you really commit to it. Otherwise, the Z is a standard hybrid of the standard definition of a good car, and another successful notch under Honda's belt.

- Shaer Reaz, In-charge of Shift, Ruiner of Perfectly Good Golden Toyota Camrys and Basic Blue Honda Civics

COLLECTIBLES



Autoart JTCC R32 Skyline

There's a reason why people are nuts about the Nissan R32 Skyline (built 1989-1991). It was one of the first cars from Japan that thoroughly worried every other sportscar manufacturer. It dominated the Japan Touring Car Championships winning the first 29 out of 29 races. Australia was the first official R32 export market and it entered the Australian Touring Car Championship. The stock car was good for 310bhp and 0-100 km/h in 4.7 seconds. That's why people dubbed it the Godzilla. It also helped that it looked great. Today we have one of those special JTCC cars, made by Autoart in 1:18 scale.

Pros: The engine and interior detailing is superb. They made sure the front wheels have the exact air duct attached to the brake calipers for cooling. This does prevent the wheels from turning much. There's even a neatly scaled and accurate working hood prop that folds flat across the radiator. The intercooler mesh, turbo piping and air filter shield are painted a lovely brushed aluminium colour. It even has photoetched brake discs.

Cons: The hinges on the hood are too big, too thick. These dog leg hinges are very Maisto level of cost cutting and detract from the overall realism.

Autoart makes every single livery used for racing as well as a couple of single colour road versions. Prices are 7-12 thousand taka online. This particular model is in for a couple of repairs from Rubab Momen of DCCCCB, BD's most active model car collector group.

WORDS & PHOTOS : EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

AUTO NEWS

Benz remodels the banana – 2018 CLS



Mercedes Benz claims to have created the concept of the "four door coupe" with the first generation of the CLS sport sedan, all the way back in 2005. Clearly the Germans have never laid eye on the pillarless, sleek beauty of the 1992 Toyota Ceres, which JDM enthusiasts will know to be the pioneering four door coupe the world never knew existed.

That first gen CLS had a love-hate affair with

people. Easily Benz's most overlooked sedan, the CLS class cars were always a little left field due to their uncanny resemblance to a banana. The AMG versions were ballistic and the unique looks won it favour with hip-hop artists, who were more than happy to place it in close proximity to scantily clad women dancing in their videos. With Audi and BMW doing their versions of the four door coupe, the CLS kept

sliding even deeper into relative obscurity.

Now, for some reason, they've brought it back for 2018. Sporting a face that looks suspiciously like a Ford Mustang and a rear end that can simply be called ugly and little else. It really isn't a looker in any sense of the word, and the question of why this exists is quite valid. No one would ever buy the CLS over an Audi RS7 anyway.