

JAZZ THE RIGHT HATCH

The Japanese hatchback has a completely new look while still retaining its superb Honda engineering. **By Samuel Ee**

SINGAPORE'S most popular Japanese hatchback is finally available as an official import and all that can be said is that it was worth the wait. The Honda Jazz has been completely redesigned from the outside. What used to be an upright little hatchback that looked like a roller skate is now more of an organic bubble.

The windscreen is larger and more steeply raked, providing those in the front seats with a commendable expanse of space and much-improved forward visibility. The back seat is less successful and immediately reminds you that you are in a small car just 3.9 metres long.

But its height – 1,525 mm – should help to negate any feelings of claustrophobia although it does render the Jazz too tall for any fast cornering.

That doesn't stop it from encouraging you though. The great thing about the Jazz is that it has sophisticated Honda engineering. It is available with 1.3 or 1.5-litre engines, and with a choice of either a five-speed manual gearbox or a five-speed automatic transmission – the first in its class. They both have shift paddles on the steering wheel and the transmissions work so smoothly that they put some bigger 2.0-litre cars to shame.

Both VTEC engines may have diminutive displacements but surprisingly, they



ZIPPY

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pack a punch. With the shift paddles, you can squeeze every available hp out of them to make the Jazz go even faster.

And you will want to go faster because the steering is so well-weighted and accurate, while the suspension has just the right amount of firmness. The all-round disc brakes are less confidence-inspiring, however, a typical Honda characteristic.

But drive it gently and you will be rewarded with superb fuel economy. The Jazz 1.3 is especially frugal – its version of the i-VTEC engine shuts down four of its 16 valves at lower speeds to reduce fuel intake. When cruising at below 70 kmh, its trip computer may indicate an amazing

18.5 km per litre. Other features include the versatile rear seat squabs which flip up to allow tall objects to be loaded in the back, an Alpine player with iPod connectivity and an optional panoramic glass roof with an electrically operated sunshade.

There is a good reason why the Jazz has been so popular for so long. As with all Hondas, it is well made and a pleasure to drive. But whoever buys it should remember that it is just a small family hatchback – not a hot hatch. If no such delusions are forthcoming, then join the crowd placing an order for one.

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SPECS

Honda Jazz 1.3 / 1.5

Engine 1,339cc / 1,496cc

Transmission 5-speed manual or 5-speed auto

Max power 100hp @ 6,000rpm / 120hp @ 6,600rpm

Max torque 127Nm @ 4,800rpm / 145Nm @ 4,800rpm

0-100 kmh 12.5 secs (A) / 11.7 secs (A)

Top speed 173 kmh (A) / 180 kmh (A)

Price from \$53,800 / from \$61,500 (both with COE)

Distributor Kah Motor

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