Honda’s latest Jazz EX Hybrid – Road Test

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HONDA'S NEW JAZZ IS SENSIBLE, PRACTICAL BUT NOT A COMPULSIVE BUY…

…says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The previous three generations of the Honda Jazz supermini five door hatchback have in design been all about packaging of its occupants. These features include best in class space, higher seating positions, good visibility, easy access, wide opening doors, good levels of safety and other equipment all wrapped up in Honda's legendary reputation for engineering quality and reliability.

Whereas previous generation Jazz models have been termed mini-MPVs because of the space and higher seating positions, they in fact tended to attract older buyers and some ‘mum’s taxi’ users. This generation the Jazz appeal has been broadened with two model types – the conventional Jazz mini-MPV and the Jazz mini-SUV/Crossover termed the Crosstar. Both are now powered by a 1.5 litre petrol engine with two electric motors combining to produce an e-HEV hybrid powertrain with an e-CVT auto transmission and front wheel drive.

The Jazz version has a larger model range with SE, SR and EX specifications whilst the Jazz Crosstar is only available with one high EX level. Prices are £18,985 through to £21,385 for the Jazz and £22,635 for the Jazz Crossstar EX. PCP finance features heavily as a way of owning a new Jazz with payments over a 36-month period with 20 to 22% deposits range from £199 to £259 a month depending on the version.

On average around 18,500 units of the Jazz have been sold annually in the UK but with the addition of the Crosstar EX this might add to the sales potential. These added Jazz owners aiming for the Crosstar version might be activity lifestyle families although they might feel the £1,250 price premium over a Jazz EX variant is a bit too much for the family budget.

What does that extra money get you with the Crosstar? Water repellent fabric upholstery so good for dog owners, children and the incontinent, Crosstar specific design alloy wheels, 8-speaker premium audio system, optional two-tone exterior paint, Crosstar specific body styling kit including more prominent bumpers, wheelarch and side sill protection mouldings and roof rails plus it has a 30 mm (1.18 in) raised ride-height. The exterior changes do make a considerable difference turning the bland looking Jazz mini-MPV into a chunkier purposeful mini-SUV.

That’s the Jazz Crosstar dealt with and regular readers will know I reviewed that model just a week or so ago. Now it’s the turn of the main-selling Jazz version, in particular the EX variant priced at £21,385 or add £550 for metallic paint. Apologies for the two Jazz type models being reviewed so closely together but pandemic issues have played havoc for car

manufacturers and their media vehicle availability and delivery operations.

The Jazz in whatever form continues to compete in the supermini sector against the like of the Ford Fiesta, VW Polo and Vauxhall Corsa. But now it's solely available as a Hybrid it has the new sporty looking Toyota Yaris Hybrid, Renault Clio Hybrid and Suzuki Swift Hybrid to compete against. The Jazz Crosstar also has the Fiesta Active and Audi A1 Sportback Citycarver as competition.



Running costs are important factors in the supermini sector but now being a Hybrid the Jazz WLTP First Year rate road tax costs £145 and £140 from then onwards as the CO2 figures

are 102/104 g/km depending on the spec level so Benefit-in-Kind tax is rated at 23%. The official WLTP Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 61.4 to 62.8 mpg and insurance groups 19A/20A for the Jazz versions. For the Jazz Crosstar the CO2 figure goes up to 110 g/km but the VED tax rates stay the same rate. However BiK goes up to 25%, the Combined Cycle fuel economy figure drops to 58.9 mpg and insurance is group 19A. Warranty for all versions is Three years/unlimited mileage.

Like all other manufacturers Honda has to reduce the overall exhaust emissions across their range of vehicles so the Jazz family has gone Hybrid and plenty of more electrified models will follow from this brand. Jazz uses a 1.5 litre, DOHC, i-VTEC, four cylinder, normally aspirated petrol engine working in tandem with two transmissions housed electric motors and they provide a total power output of a modest 109 hp. But more importantly 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) of electric propulsion torque is available with the power units coupled with a fixed-gear CVT type transmission and compact lithium-ion battery.

The e: HEV hybrid system has three interchangeable driving modes. In EV Drive the lithium-ion battery provides power directly to the driving motor which powers the wheels. In Hybrid Drive the engine supplies power to the electric generator motor which in turn supplies the electric propulsion motor. In Engine Drive the petrol engine directly drives the front wheels. In addition there is an EV mode for pure electric only driving for just a very few miles and there is an ECO mode which can be used all the time with no great loss in performance.



In most urban driving situations best efficiency is achieved with transitions between EV Drive and Hybrid Drive. For driving at motorway speeds, Engine Drive is used, supplemented by an on-demand peak power ‘boost’ from the electric propulsion motor for faster acceleration.

In Hybrid Drive, excess power from the petrol engine can also be diverted to recharge the battery via the generator motor. EV Drive is also engaged when the car is decelerating, harvesting energy through regenerative braking to recharge the battery. It’s very clever and seamless in operation with punchy in-town acceleration torque, or it can still be very docile in slow stop-start traffic conditions. On the open road it’s no more than reasonable for engine response and if pushed for acceleration or climbing a steep hill the engine did sound stressed. However it was very frugal for real-life driving fuel use.



For the Jazz EX model I have been driving the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.5 seconds and the top speed 108 mph. The WLTP Combined Cycle figure for this version is 61.4 mpg and during my week of driving, over long and short journeys, the final overall figure was 60.2 mpg – just a shade better by a marginal amount than the heavier and taller riding Crosstar version I tried earlier.

Performance wise I didn't feel the Jazz EX was as nimble as the new and sportier looking, sharp handling Toyota Yaris Hybrid or perhaps as strong for mid-range acceleration response as the new Renault Clio Hybrid. The ride I thought was a little firmer in this Jazz

EX model than that of the Crosstar but the ride was slightly more controlled during cornering due to the lower suspension height.

The big plus for the Jazz however is its interior packaging space, roomy, easy access, comfortable with class leading load space. Whichever new Jazz version you decide upon, overall the vehicle has a short bonnet, a long roof line and very slim twin A-pillars. Combined with the swept back windscreen this creates a flowing line over the roof to the neat rear spoiler. The add-on styling cues, like the roof rails, wider front and rear tracks, and wheelarch and sill mouldings with marginally larger dimensions afforded to Crosstar version I think are a better kerb appeal 'look' than this standard Jazz model which appears bland and not very interesting. The street-cred of the Crosstar version is better.

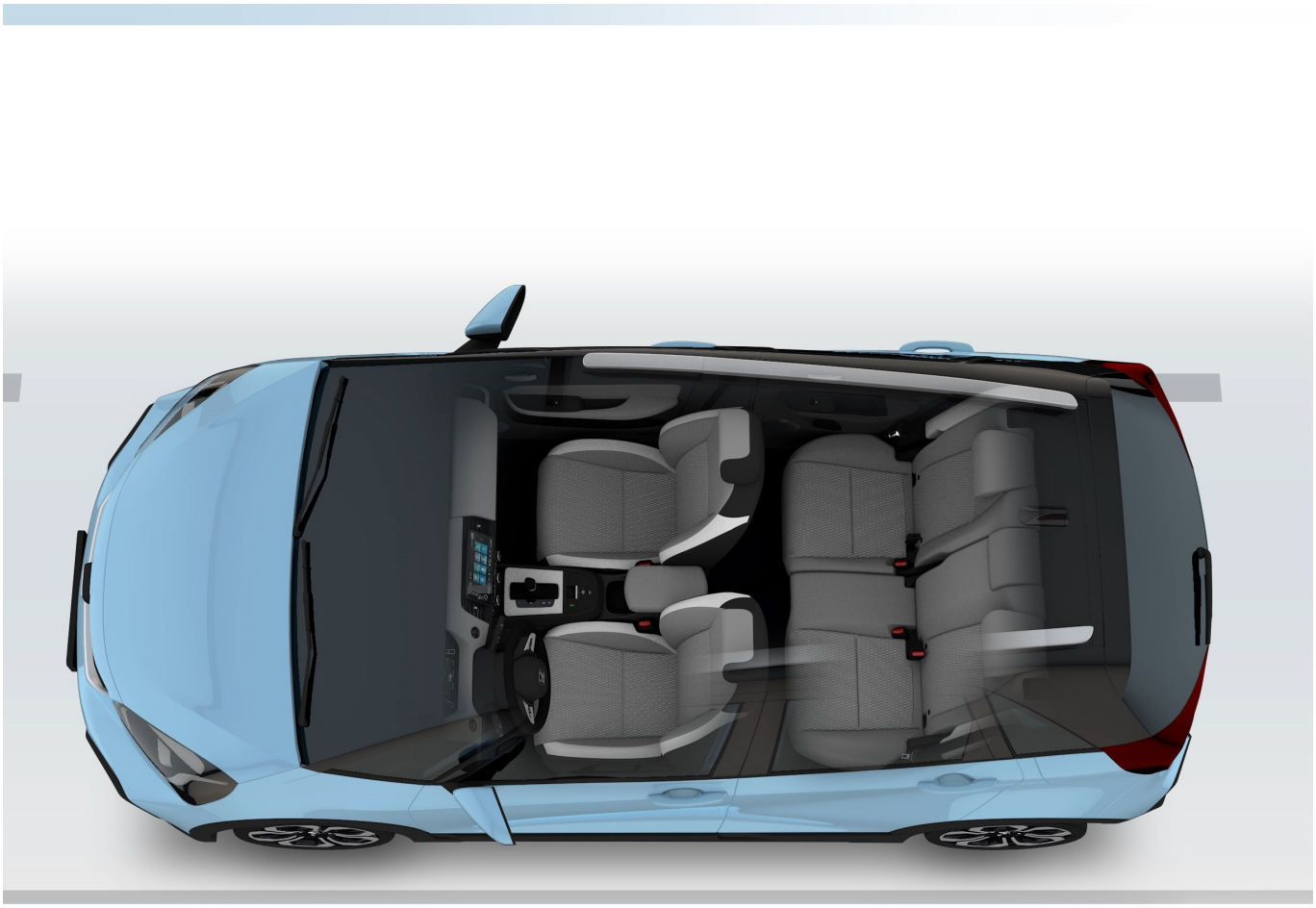


The overall length of the Jazz is 4,044 mm (13.27 ft), the width 1,694 mm (5.56 ft), height

1,526 mm (5.01 ft), wheelbase 2,517 mm (8.26 ft), all just a shade less than the Crosstar. However the Jazz has a slightly larger boot of 304 litres (10.74 cu.ft) which is not class-leading but fold down the rear seat backs and this goes up to 1,205 litres (42.55 cu.ft) which makes it top of its class. The very clever rear Magic Seats, as Honda calls them, fold completely flat giving a very easy to use load floor. Another magic trick is with the rear seat backrests in the upright positions the seat squabs lift upwards, like a cinema seat, to give extra carrying space behind the front seats when no rear passengers are being carried.

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All the doors are wide opening to allow ‘easy in’ and ‘easy out’ of the vehicle for passengers of all ages. The higher mounted seats also help accommodating more aged users as well as loading the young into their child seats. Over the years it has been easy to see why the Jazz has been the benchmark comparison model for size and space in the supermini market sector and the new generation versions continue that role.



Up front the MPV style high and wide windscreen with slim twin A-pillars gives excellent visibility and the higher mounted front seats also aid all-round visibility. All versions have a full range of 10 airbags including the new front centre airbag fitted within the back of the driver's seat. If deployed in the event of a side impact it expands into the space between the driver and front passenger cushioning them from each other. Storage space around the vehicle is good and the additional cup holders either ends of the dashboard are excellent practical features.

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The design of the wide dashboard makes interesting moulded use of soft-touch trim materials rather than acres of black plastic. Central is a modest in size 9-inch touchscreen and an equally modestly sized 7-inch TFT instrument cluster screen in front of the driver. The introduction of Digital Cockpits, iCockpits and the like by many other manufacturers does make the Jazz displays look minimal but overall the dashboard design looks classy.

It was also good to see that Jazz has proper heating controls although some functions are still operated via the touchscreen. Others are done by controls housed in the spokes of the steering wheel. There is the usual supply of graphics for energy use and the Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity and infotainment functions. The Blind Spot monitoring function including Cross Traffic Alerts, rear view camera and a proper integrated sat-nav for the EX spec level were good features. The Off-Road Mitigation System and Lane Departure System were far too intrusive although if you want maximum safety ratings on the path to autonomous driving, the car has to have them. I just couldn't find a way to turn them off so big brother (or sister) is already watching you.

VERDICT

Practical, versatile, clever seating/luggage arrangements, easy to live with, if unexciting.

For: New Jazz, as with the Crosstar version, is easy to drive, easy to live with, has high safety specification, clever seating, fuel and tax efficient, practical if unexciting motoring.

Against: The Jazz version does not have the more interesting styling cues of the more expensive Crosstar version, its overall exterior 'look' is somewhat bland and boring and very dependent on the body colour, sluggish to load touchscreen operation, firm ride, very intrusive lane mitigation and driving lane alerts even on winding country roads.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Honda Jazz EX, e-HEV Hybrid, five door hatchback.



Price: £21,385.

Powertrain: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, DOHC petrol engine plus 2 electric motors, total power output 109 hp and 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) of torque, e-CVT fixed gear auto transmission. Performance: 108 mph, 0 – 62 mph 9.5 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 61.4 mpg (60.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 104g/km, VED first Year road tax £145, Standard rate £140, BiK company car tax 23%.

Insurance Group: 20A.

Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,044 mm (13.27 ft), W 1,694 mm (5.56 ft), H 1,526 mm (5.01 ft), wheelbase 2,517 mm (8.26 ft), boot/load space 304 to 1,205 litres (10.74 to 42.55 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.