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New Honda Jazz Crosstar– Road Test

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MORE JAZZ BUT DOES IT HIT THE RIGHT NOTE FOR HONDA?

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

It might be music to some people's ears that Honda is bringing us more Jazz but their F1 programme looks more like hokey cokey! Announced last week Honda F1 is quitting at the end of next year. They were first involved in 1964 and out in 1968, in again in 1983 and out in 1992, back in again in 2000, out in 2008 in again in 2015 and now out again in 2021. The company says it is the car industry's move towards electric power that has brought about this latest decision.



Honda is also stopping car manufacturing in the UK next year, again saying they will produce more electric vehicles from their domestic Japanese factories. The company has said it aims to have all its car model ranges in Europe electrified by 2022 and their E Advance compact all-electric car is ready for orders priced at £29,160.

To get you into the eco motoring mood the new Honda Jazz e:HEV hybrid supermini is the fourth generation in a Jazz lifetime spanning almost 20-years and it has been a firm favourite for certain types of customers, because of its space, reliability, specification and ease of driving.

It has been a totally practical vehicle for those who have reached a time in their life when sensible practicality becomes even more of a priority. In the UK it achieves on average around 18,500 sales a year, around 42% of Honda's total new car 2019 sales.

This time around Honda has gone a step further to broaden the appeal of the Jazz. In addition to the new Jazz Hatchback we have the Jazz Crosstar which is a pseudo SUV styled model, but don't expect anything other than front wheel drive.



Also this time around for the European markets the Jazz branded e:HEV hybrid in both forms, are only available in hybrid form comprising of a 1.5 litre, four cylinder petrol engine with its electric support motors housed in the e-CVT fixed gear auto transmission.

The Jazz hybrid will still need to compete with the main sellers in the supermini sector such as the Ford Fiesta, VW Polo and Vauxhall Corsa but now it's solely a hybrid it will sell against the equally new and sporty looking Toyota Yaris Hybrid, the Renault Clio Hybrid and the Suzuki Swift Hybrid. The Jazz Crosstar in theory has less competition in the form of the Crossover/SUV inspired Ford Fiesta Active and Audi A1 Sportback Citycarver. These are all examples of hatchbacks which have morphed into fashionable off-road style vehicles.



Price will be another deciding factor. The Jazz has never been the least costly in its market sector and now new Jazz is priced from £18,985 to £21,385 through SE, SR and EX spec levels. The Jazz Crosstar is available with just one high EX spec level priced at £22,635 which is £1,285 dearer than the Jazz EX variant. For that extra money you get water resistant fabric upholstery, 8-speaker premium audio system, two-tone exterior paintwork, Crosstar specific 16-inch alloy wheels, a black cladding body styling kit of wheelarch and sill mouldings, roof rails, bespoke grille design and a 30 mm (1.18 in) raised ride height. So it's easy to see the additional Crosstar model is aimed at active lifestyle customers, or dog owners, given the water repellent upholstery, or just followers of fashion.

All Jazz models including the Crosstar are available with Premium Paint and Premium + Paint options ranging from £550 to £950.

Talking of cost 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 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 at 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, and warranty for all versions is three years/unlimited mileage.

So the Jazz Crosstar costs more to buy than the Jazz, it's more expensive for fuel and costs more in company car tax, so it might be a hard-sell for Honda with this version. That is the model I have been test driving this week as my first drive of the new Jazz range. The Crosstar won't be the best seller in the new line-up but it will be the most distinctive for styling.

It also rides a little softer I'm told than the Jazz because of its different wheels and tyres but there is more body-roll during cornering because of the raised ride height. Time will tell for me as next week I get into the Jazz version for a back-to-back road test.



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 bumpers appear more solid and give the vehicle a bolder stance than before. The add-on styling cues and marginally larger dimensions afforded to Crosstar version further enhance vehicles new stronger image.

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The overall length of the Jazz Crosstar is 4,090 mm or 13.42 ft, +46 mm (1.81 in) over the standard Jazz, the width 1,725 mm or 5.66 ft (+31mm or 1.22 in), height 1,556 mm or 5.10 ft (+30 mm or 1.18 in), wheelbase 2,520 mm or 8.27 ft (+3 mm or 0.12 in) and the Crosstar has marginally increased track widths front and rear. When it comes to that important boot and load space the Crosstar has a compact 298 litre (10.52 cu.ft) boot, 4 litres (0.14 cu.ft) less than the standard Jazz and with the very clever rear Magic Seats folded flat the full load space is 1,199 litres (42.34 cu.ft) for the Crosstar and 1,205 litres (42.55 cu.ft) for the Jazz. Not only do the best in sector Magic Seats fold completely flat but with the backrests in the upright positions the seat squabs life upwards, like a cinema seat, to give extra carrying space behind the front seats when no rear passengers are being carried.



Up front the wide dashboard has interesting 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. A proper integrated sat-nav system is fitted to EX and Crosstar models. All versions have a full range of no less than 10 airbags including the



new front centre airbag fitted within the back of the driver's seat and if deployed in the event of a side impact expanding 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 at either ends of the dashboard are excellent practical features.

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 in 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.

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That's the packaging the new Jazz and Jazz Crosstar models bring to the market. In addition like many other manufacturers having to reduce the overall exhaust emissions across their range of vehicles, the Jazz family has gone hybrid. The 1.5 litre, DOHC, i-VTEC, four cylinder, normally aspirated petrol engine works in tandem with two transmission 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 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 obvious 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 Crosstar model I have been driving the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.9 seconds and the top speed 107 mph as opposed to the 9.4/108 figures of other models. The WLTP Combined Cycle figure for the Crosstar is 58.9 mpg and during my week of driving, over long and short journeys, the final overall figure was 58.1 mpg but on two longer trips the figure was 62.5 mpg.



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VERDICT

Performance wise I didn't feel the Jazz Crosstar was as nimble as the new Toyota Yaris Hybrid I tried very recently which has similar performance figures and the Yaris looks a sportier vehicle as well. The big plus for the Jazz however is its interior packaging space, roomy, easy access, comfortable with class leading load space. The new Crosstar SUV styling might just improve Jazz's appeal to young active lifestyle families who have lots of kit to carry or owners of a more senior age who traditionally transport dogs, or grandchildren or garden items, hopefully not all at the same time of course.

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



Against: Crosstar version adds to the already high price of other new Jazz models, SUV styling is probably more about fashion than function, sluggish touchscreen operation, increased ride height induces some body roll during cornering.



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

Honda Jazz Crosstar EX, e-HEV Hybrid, 5-door hatchback.



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Price: £22,635 (£23,585 as tested with metallic Premium + paint).

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: 107 mph, 0 - 62 mph 9.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 58.9 mpg (58.1 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 110 g/km, VED first Year road tax £145, Standard rate £140, BiK company car tax 25%.

Insurance Group: 19E.



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Warranty: Three years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,090 mm (13.42 ft), W 1,725 mm (5.66 ft), H 1,556 mm (5.10 ft), wheelbase 2,520 mm (8.27 ft), boot/load space 298 to 1,199 litres (10.52 to 42.34 ft), five doors/five seats.