



DAWN OF AN EON

Hyundai's attractive new ace of base looks nothing like a low-cost car. And it doesn't really feel, behave or drive like one either. STORY SHAPUR KOTWAL

Low-cost cars are made up of low-cost bits. Built on hand-me-down platforms, with aged components and geriatric engines, these entry level vehicles are made with just two targets in mind: a subterranean price and two-wheeler-shaming fuel economy. And the longer they stay in the market, the more effective and affordable they seem to become. Maruti's bestseller, the 800, has been around since 1986 and even the 'recent' Alto has been here for more than a decade. For a very long time, the only factors posing a threat to these iconic bottom feeders were advancing emission and safety norms, both of which resulted in increasing costs.

Then, of course, came Tata's attractive and even cheaper Nano, a car that rewrote

the entry car rulebook. Suddenly, low cost didn't seem all that impossible and cheap cars didn't have to be boxy.

IS THIS REALLY LOW COST?

Hyundai's Eon has taken things to the next level. Heavily sculpted and intricately detailed, this is as far from the Logan as you are likely to get. The wheel arches and the shoulder line are so complex, you'd have to go all the way up to something like a Mercedes-Benz CLS to see anything similar. Hyundai has also given the Eon attractive headlights, complete with chrome detailing. And the top-spec version looks like it will get fog lights as well. There's a hint of Hyundai's hexagonal grille up front, a sharp ridge runs up the A-pillar and the steeply raked

front windscreen and tight-fit roof give this otherwise tall boy a sporty profile.

Like all compact Hyundai hatchbacks, the Eon is built around a 2380mm wheelbase. But this car is even shorter in overall length than the Santro, and it's lighter as well. Clever use of steel with variable thickness has been used to make the Eon both reasonably stiff and light. And at 715-795kg, it is as light as Maruti's Alto, which is saying something.

FRESH, MODERN AND SUFFICIENTLY SPACIOUS

Like the exteriors, even the interiors look ridiculously modern and grown up. The insides, which remind you of a well kitted-out i10, are full of clever little shelves and cubbyholes. Hyundai designers even sampled 30 different



Interiors look nothing like a low-cost car. The central console has been designed to resemble a 'Ganesh' statue.

front seats. Thigh support is fairly good and headroom is sufficient as well.

THE POWER OF THREE

The best place to sit, of course, is up front. Space is generous, the seats are reasonably large and supportive, and there's enough space for the driver to work the pedals comfortably. The Eon is powered by a three-cylinder version of the Santro IRDE engine, and at 814cc and 56bhp, it seems to have a reasonable amount of pep. Hyundai, however, hasn't managed to get the refinement of the three-cylinder unit right. In the prototype that we drove, there was some amount of vibration at idle. The motor felt thrummy at times and though it did smoothen up nicely once on the move, the top end felt a bit strained too. There's surely scope for improvement here, especially before the car is signed off. However, the motor has plenty of performance from the strong midrange, and the Eon has sufficient power for most city conditions.

Stability was also surprisingly good on our short drive at the Namyang technical centre in Korea, with the Eon feeling agile and keen to turn into corners. With its alternator management system, light weight and efficient engine, Hyundai is also claiming 21.1kpl, something that will go a long way in enhancing the appeal of this car. Now all it needs is the right price. **AJ**

mineral water bottles for size before designing the doorpads. The car is well equipped too. It sports a CD player, USB audio, remote locking, a shift indicator on the dash, and tilt steering.

With the steeply raked windscreen at the front and the short length, space is at a premium. And adding fuel to the fire is the luggage space, which is large for this class of car. The boot, dimensionally similar to the Santro's, holds 215 litres of luggage. This means kneeroom for rear-seat passengers is tight, especially when there's a tall driver up ahead. Also, the 'kick-up' in the beltline of the car and the subsequent rising window line tend to make it somewhat claustrophobic at the rear. The upright seating position though, the saving grace here, allows rear-seat passengers to place their feet under the

COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGE

FACTFILE

HYUNDAI EON

VITALS		
Price	Rs 2.8-3.8 lakh (est ex-showroom)	
Length	3495mm	
Width	1550mm	
Height	1500mm	
Wheelbase	2380mm	
Kerb weight	715-795kg	
Engine	814cc SOHC, petrol	
Power	56bhp at 5500rpm	
Torque	7.65kgm at 4000rpm	
Boot	215 litres	
Fuel economy	21.1kpl*	

* CLAIMED

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

AUTOCAR SCOOP



HYUNDAI DID ALMOST everything possible to keep its new and frankly very attractive-looking Eon under wraps. Then, just as we were sending these pages to press, these stunning images of Hyundai's baby slipped into our inbox. Taken by Autocar reader Puneet Ghai, they show the car being tested on a track somewhere in India. Hyundai's hexagonal grille, the large wraparound headlights, and the wide chin are clearly visible. Look at the car in profile and the Eon's Fluidic lines are pretty evident as well. This car is even full of curves at the rear, especially the large tail-lights. One thing's for sure, the Eon looks anything but low cost.