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EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

TATA ZEST

Tata's fight back begins with this new compact saloon



Tata Bolt Much more than just a Vista facelift



haymarket

EXCLUSIVE FIRST DRIVES

New Fiat Linea

Hugely improved inside and out



Renault Kwid

Funky concept points to future SUV



FIRST DRIVE

Hyundai Santa Fe

Versatile SUV is Hyundai's best yet



ALSO INSIDE

- » How safe are Indian cars?
- » New wave of automatics
- » Sideways in a rally Polo
- » Kawasaki Z800 ridden
- » F1 2014 season preview

20-PAGE AUTO EXPO REPORT » SCOOP! M&M's XUV500 AUTO

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KWID

You might scoff at Renault's new Kwid concept, calling it some flight of fancy that a bunch of futurist French designers dreamed up after a month-long mind-melding session. The truth is it was partly designed in India, and in ten years' time, your Renault SUV might even resemble it. It's real, it runs, and we've driven it. Turn to page 122.



No Kwidding

'Designers from Russia, Brazil and India shaped the Kwid into being.'

Renault's concept car, the Kwid, shows that the Duster's successor might already be in the works.

PHOTOGRAPHY MOHAMMED SHAFIQ

THE TYRES SLAP angrily at the concrete. Everything is vibrating lightly. Even I am rocking to and fro in my seat. The wraparound screen and the low roof add a sense of futuristic excitement. This is what thundering down the runway in a fighter jet must feel like, I think. Should I, or shouldn't I? For an instant, my gaze sweeps away from the world outside, past the aircraft-style yoke, to peek at the speedometer. The digital readout shows a mighty 12kph. Dare I take it to 15? We'll get back to that in a bit.

SHOW TOPPER

A week prior, while standing perfectly still at the Auto Expo, the Kwid had drawn hordes to the Renault stall. It offered a tantalising glimpse at the kind of compact SUV we could see from the French company in the future. Renault has a few markets clearly in its sights and it was making no bones about the fact that ours is one of them. At 3.62 metres long, the Kwid is well under India's vital four-metre mark, and while the spare wheel is underslung on this concept, you can expect it to

eventually be mounted on the tail to liberate more room. The production intent continues under the hood, where sits a 1.2-litre, four-cylinder petrol motor mated to a six-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission. Combined with the size, this hi-tech, direct-injection turbocharged engine helps the Kwid fit our small car regulations perfectly. What intensifies the seriousness of this concept is that it marks the very first time a Renault concept has made its global debut outside of Europe. That's not all – once it was done wowing the showgoers at the Expo, Renault gave us a chance to pilot the Kwid.

DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

I meet the Kwid on a closed section of road in a housing township. Now, outside a hall, in plain daylight and an everyday surrounding, the Kwid looks even more dramatic. Its squared and low-slung form, almost non-existent overhangs, and wheels pushed out to the corners give it a strong go-anywhere attitude. The contrasting grey and yellow colour scheme gives it a rugged yet →

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The ambience inside the high-tech cabin has a certain aircraft-like quality to it.



Driver sits in the centre; tablet controls the remote-controlled flying camera drone.



These strappy, nest-inspired seats should be cooler for the hot Indian climate.



Expect the production-ready Kwid to be longer, wider and carry four regular doors.

← youthful appeal, while the yellow floating roof and pillarless glasshouse cap the cabin tightly. At the front, the yellow grille is sliced fine, and the front bumper is dimpled to give the Kwid more tactility. There is no shortage of quirky and futuristic elements – the headlamps jut out at the corners with the protruding bits housing very visible turn indicators, in true concept fashion the rear-view mirrors have been replaced by cameras, and unsurprisingly, the tyres have a stylised tread pattern. Their 305/50-section rubber, however, is definitely surprising. At the rear, the three-dimensional tail-lamps are a highlight with a glossy black section on the tailgate.

To get inside you need to press a touch-sensitive switch on the door. This causes the clamshell doors to flip dramatically out and up. As can be expected, the interiors are anything but ordinary. The first thing that strikes you is that the steering is in the middle. Renault did this to show that it can be adapted to both left- and right-hand-drive markets. The front bench seats three, with the passengers staggered

slightly behind the driver. The bench is mounted on a single spar, and it slides to make room for access to the rear bench.

FUTURE-READY

So, finally, what was the Kwid like to drive? Under the skin, the concept is an amalgamation of components borrowed from existing Renault products and some custom-made bits. While the Kwid can be used as an EV, we used it only on conventional fuel. The 1.2-litre engine's 120-horsepower rating is ample for the two-wheel-drive duty that the car is doing for now. On our test drive, which by any yardstick has been very meagre, the Kwid felt hugely exciting. Which is saying a lot when you consider that we rarely crossed 15kph.

But what makes the Kwid truly

thrilling are its concept-car origins – it feels fantastic in the truest sense of the word. The creaks and groans from the body are plenty, compliance from the suspension is non-existent, and when combined with the funky pattern for the tyres, going above 15kph is like hitting a self-destruct switch, especially on the broken concrete we're driving on. Normally, concept cars are life-size, carefully-shaved clay models or wooden mock-ups. So, the fact that the Kwid can actually be driven is an achievement in itself. Back to serious reviewing mode though, the electric steering is effortless and the turbocharged, direct-injection engine eager.

Realistically, driving the Kwid told us little, but we are glad we did, because there's no two ways about it, Renault's future compact SUV is being shaped here and with

the first car on its new CMF-A platform slated for 2015, the Kwid's production-ready successor can't be too far behind.

KARTIKEYA SINGHEE

RENAULT KWID CONCEPT



Length	3616mm
Width	1939mm
Height	1565mm
Wheelbase	2286mm
Front track	1544mm
Rear track	1613mm
Engine	4 cyls, 1197cc, direct-injection, turbo-charged, petrol + electric motor
Layout	Front, transverse
Power	118bhp
Gearbox	6-speed, dual-clutch, automatic
Overhang (f/r)	657/673mm
Ground clearance (f/r)	187.5/225.5mm
Tyre size	305/50 R16

'Renault's economical CMF-A platform will power new products like the Kwid.'



Conceptually cool – hollowed out indicators glow on both sides, specially crafted Continental tyres for show car, spare wheel is slung underneath, unrestrained tail lamps.



Funky-pattern tyres great to strike a pose with, but on the go, they threaten to shake this concept apart. The Kwid was, however, surprisingly manoeuvrable.