

Firing on All Cylinders

■ By Yogendra Pratap

Not surprisingly, the hype and hoopla over the launch of Tata's small car has virtually obscured the fact that 2008 is going to be a year when a host of exciting new cars will hit the Indian auto market. Turbocharged by the positive signals for the automobile sector, no less than 30 new models will make their debut on Indian roads from marquees ranging from BMW, Mercedes, Audi and Volvo in the luxury segment to premium sedans from Volkswagen, Toyota, Honda and Fiat, while the market will also see the largest number of small car launches. Along with the SUVs and MUVs, anyone planning to buy a new car or upgrade will be spoilt for choice. Adding to this will be a number of facelifts, new engines and variants, so the options could well be close to the three-figure mark.

In fact, 2008 is poised to revolutionise the Indian auto industry like never before. It will be the year of dieselisation as Bosch ramps up production of its made-in-India common

rail direct injection kits and also readies systems for the ultra-small capacity diesel engines. The Fiat-Tata Motors engine plant will go on-stream later in the year and the Maruti Suzuki diesel engine plant will be running for its first full calendar year.

So appropriately, it's worth looking at the calendar girls, or the auto equivalent. The hot new launches will be spearheaded by the Germans, with the Volkswagen Group leading the way. With all the group car assembly operations being consolidated at Aurangabad and the work on the Pune plant well underway, VW is all set to blaze a trail in India. Skoda-Auto is entering the mass market segment for the first time, while Audi is consolidating its base with an expanding network and introduction of more India-assembled cars in addition to the A6. VW itself will be launching a number of premium products until its manufacturing facilities are ready. BMW already has assembly going ahead at full steam at Chennai with a sizeable order list and is now looking at introducing more of its pure performance cars,

LARGE HATCHBACKS



TATA INDICA V3 ▲

Rs 3.5-5.5 lakh (approx)

Specifications: 1.4 petrol, 80 bhp; 1.3 multijet diesel, 75 bhp; 1.5-litre DICOR

USP: Contemporarily-designed Indica with larger proportions. Interiors spruced up with centre-mounted instrumentation. Multijet diesel engines from Fiat will make the V3 a pleasure to drive. To compete with: Chevrolet Aveo U-VA, Hyundai Getz Prime, Suzuki Swift

SUZUKI SPLASH ▼

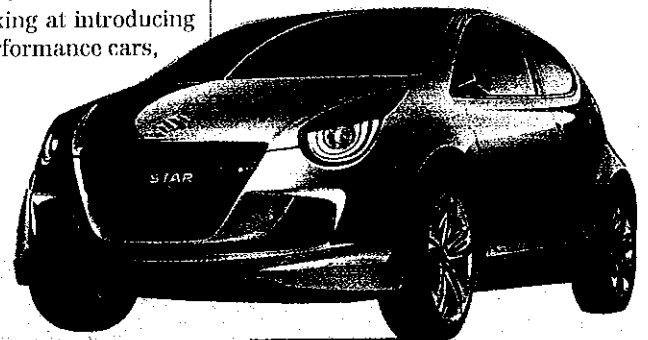
Rs 4 lakh (approx)

Specifications: 1-litre, 60 bhp, 3-cylinder petrol; 1.2-litre, 85 bhp, 4-cylinder petrol; 1.3-litre, 75 bhp, 4-cylinder diesel
USP: Replacement of the Wagon-R. Retains the advantages of an MPV while looking like a car. High seating, feeling of space and flexibility with all the features of higher-end cars.

To compete with: Hyundai Getz, Mahindra-Renault Logan, Ford Ikon and Suzuki Swift.



SMALL CARS



▲ SUZUKI A-STAR

Rs 3 lakh (approx)

Specifications: 1 litre all aluminium engine, 60 bhp

USP: Maruti's new small car is developed for India by Indians. Will be stylish, fuel-efficient and environment friendly with contemporary features. To compete with: Hyundai Santro and i10

Winders

WITH AN ARRAY OF NEW MODELS AND VARIANTS ON OFFER AT VERY COMPETITIVE PRICES, AUTOMAKERS ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET FOR THE INDIAN BUYER THIS YEAR

SKODA FABIA ▶

Rs 4.99-7 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH (mm) 3992x1642x1513; 1.4-litre petrol, 68 bhp; 1.4-litre diesel, 85 bhp
USP: Well-appointed small car with lots of space and frugal diesel engine. Sturdy and well-built with good ride. Features of luxury cars in a hatch-back.

To compete with: Hyundai Getz and low-end sedans like the Mahindra-Renault Logan and Ford Ikon



◀ HONDA JAZZ

Rs 5.5- 7.5 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm) 3997x1681x1524; 1.2 petrol, 90 bhp

USP: Lots of interior space and a blend of performance and fuel-efficiency make it viable in the fast-growing segment.

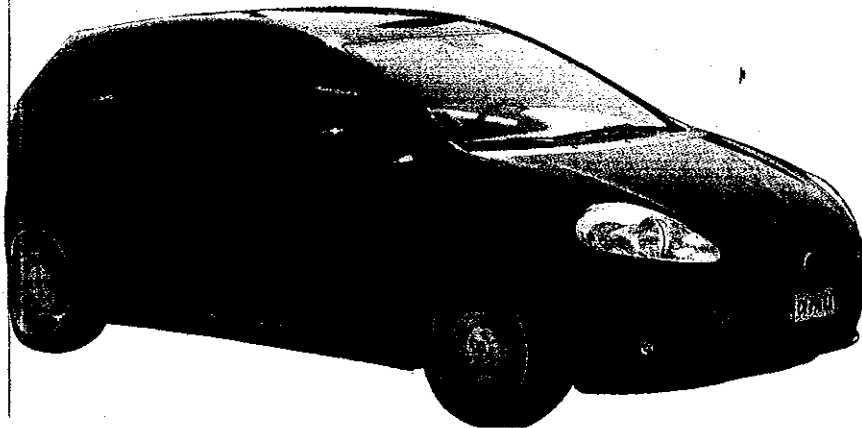
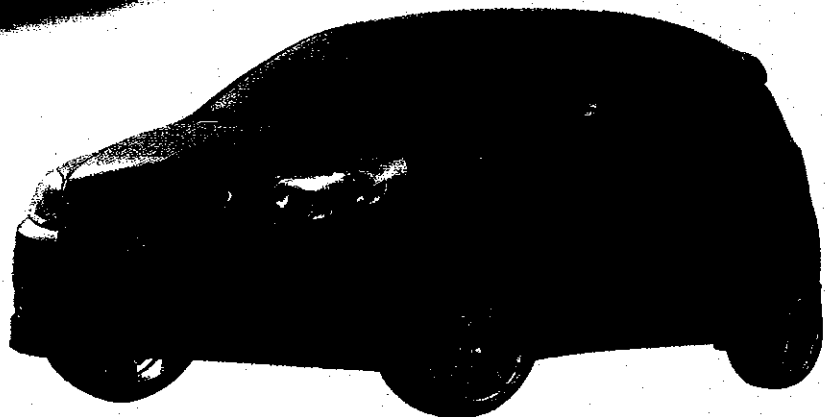
To compete with: Skoda Fabia, Suzuki Swift, Hyundai Getz Prime, Chevrolet SRV and U-VA

FIAT GRANDE PUNTO ▼

Rs 4.5-6 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm) 4030x1687x1490; 1.2-litre 65 bhp petrol; 1.3-litre 85 bhp diesel
USP: The stylish car has revived Fiat fortunes around the world. Will share engines with GenNext Tata cars and be sold through the Tata network.

To compete with: The low-end sedans and Suzuki Swift



CHEVROLET AVEO U-VA ▲

Rs 4.5-5.5 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH(mm): 3920x1680x1510mm; 1.2 petrol, 84 bhp

USP: A superb combination of radical styling and an engine, which will merge fuel-efficiency and power. Expect more room inside considering it adopts tall-boy proportions.

To compete with: Honda Jazz, Hyundai Getz Prime, Suzuki Swift and Skoda Fabia

ENTRY-LEVEL SEDANS

TATA INDIGO NOTCHBACK ▼

Rs 4-5 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm): 3995x1620 x1540; 1.4 petrol 84 bhp; 1.4 diesel, 70 bhp

USP: A chopped boot and a less bulbous bumper mean it will comply with the excise duty reduction benefits for small cars.

To compete with: Mahindra Renault Logan, Tata Indigo, Swift, Hyundai Getz Prime



SUZUKI SWIFT SEDAN ▼

Rs 5.5-lakh (approx)

Specifications: 1.3 litre, 87 bhp petrol; 1.3 litre, 75 bhp diesel

USP: A Swift with a boot will replace the Esteem. Fuel efficiency, sporty style and upmarket feel will appeal to the buyer.

To compete with: Ford Ikon, Mahindra-Renault Logan, Hyundai Accent, Tata Indigo



PREMIUM SEDANS

FIAT LINEA ▶

Rs 8 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm) 3950x1500x1300; 1.4 litre petrol, 77 bhp; 1.4 litre petrol, 120 bhp; 1.3 litre diesel, 90 bhp

USP: Good looking. With powerful 1.3 litre Multijet engine, should be on top of the performance and fuel efficiency charts.

To compete with: Honda City, Suzuki SX4, Chevrolet Optra



while rival Mercedes-Benz is getting ready to move into a larger plant of its own and will be fast expanding its India-model range.

Volvo Cars has started operations and will have three very different cars in the market this year, a large SUV, a luxury sedan, and now a convertible. But 2008 is going to be the year of two of India's largest automakers, the homegrown Tata Motors and the erstwhile-homegrown Maruti Suzuki. While the former is making all the news because of the Rs 1-lakh car, it is its other products that will be even more crucial, namely the next generation Indica and the new Sumo. Also as crucial will be the speed with which it can get its partnership with Fiat productive and get trouble-free supply of its new generation engines.

With the launch of the Swift and the change of its name, Maruti Suzuki has laid to rest its staid image and 2008 will be a watershed year for India's largest car maker as it tries to hold on to its marketshare. The company has shown that it is prepared to take some bold steps going forward by discontinuing the Zen and it has some more amputations to make in 2008, starting with the Esteem. Not only will it plug the gaps in its model range in

LUXURY SEDANS



MERCEDES-BENZ C-CLASS ▲

Rs 29-31 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH (mm) 4596x1770x1447; 1.8 litre petrol, 185 bhp; 2.2 litre diesel, 180 bhp

USP: Unrivalled snob value in the country. High on luxury and safety. Class leading performance.

To compete with: BMW 3-series, Audi A4, Skoda Superb and Nissan Teana

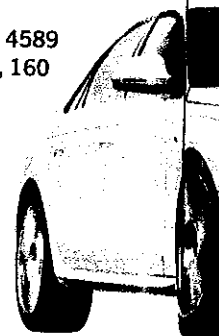
AUDI A4 ▶

Rs 26-28 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH (mm): 4589 x1816x1415; 1.8 litre petrol, 160 bhp; 2 litre diesel, 138 bhp

USP: The best cabin in terms of quality. Equipment list is exhaustive. Cheaper than rivals.

To compete with: BMW 3-series, Mercedes Benz C-Class, Skoda Superb



VOLKSWAGEN JETTA ▶

Rs 9-11 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm): 4550x1780x1460; 2 litre petrol, 148 bhp; 2 litre diesel, 167 bhp

USP: New-age VW looks. Expect brilliant build quality and high-performing engines.

To compete with: Chevrolet Optra Magnum, Honda Civic, Toyota Corolla, Skoda Octavia and Mitsubishi Cedia

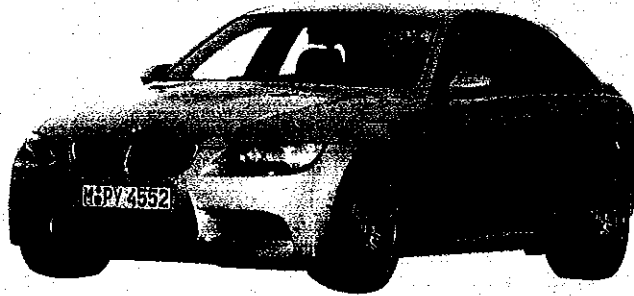


SKODA SUPERB

Specifications: 2 litre diesel, 140 bhp

USP: Apart from being larger than its predecessor and more spacious sedan, the new Superb also adopts a notchback design giving it good utilitarian boot space. Insides are modern and this too will be a brilliant value for money buy given its E-Class rivaling dimensions and equipment.

To compete with: Audi A4, BMW 3 series, Honda Accord, Mercedes C-Class, Nissan Teana etc



BMW M3

Rs 55-65 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm)

4615x1804x1418; 4 litre petrol, 414 bhp

USP: Gut-wrenching acceleration. Heart stopping braking. Road presence and road holding like none other in the country. Is an enthusiasts delight.



VOLVO C70

Rs 40 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH (mm)

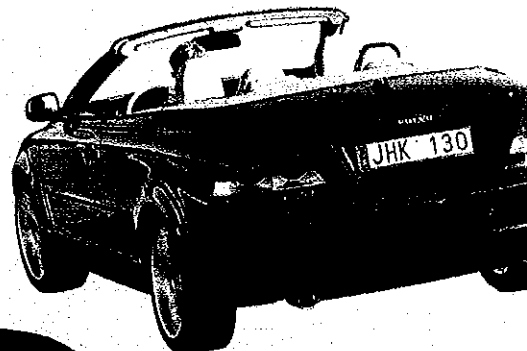
4582x1820x1400; T5 petrol 230

bhp, D5 diesel 136 bhp

USP: Convertible with an automatically retractable roof. Two-door

but space enough for four adults.

Safety that Volvo stands for with versatility, storage space.



HYUNDAI I30

Rs 10-12 lakh (approx)

Specifications: 1.8 petrol, 126 bhp;

2 diesel, 140 bhp

USP: Contemporary outside and inside. Diesel engine will deliver

ample performance and fuel efficiency.

To compete with: Honda Civic,

Chevrolet Optra Magnum, Toyota Corolla,

Skoda Octavia and Mitsubishi Cedia.



TOYOTA COROLLA

Rs 10.50-11.50 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm)

4524x1760x1465; 1.8 litre petrol,

130 bhp; 2 litre diesel, 130 bhp

USP: Will have benchmark build

quality and reliability. Ride and

handling package will be well sorted.

To be loaded with safety equipment.

To compete with: Honda Civic, Skoda

Octavia, Hyundai Elantra and Chevrolet

Optra Magnum



HONDA ACCORD

Rs 16-18 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm)

4930x1847x1475; 2.4 litre

petrol, 177 bhp; 3.5 litre

petrol, 268 bhp

USP: Takes luxury to a higher level

compared to its predecessor. Outdoes

the former in performance and fuel efficiency.

High on status barometer.

To compete with: Toyota Camry, Skoda

Superb, Hyundai Sonata, Nissan Teana



MULTI-UTILITY VEHICLES

MAHINDRA INGENIO

Rs 6.5-8 lakh (approx)
 Specifications: 2.6-litre, 115 bhp;
 2.2-litre, 125 bhp CRDe diesel
 engines

USP: An MUV with comfort of a car
 but built to a price. Six to eight seaters
 will also be available as utility van.

To compete with: Toyota
 Innova, Mahindra Scorpio and
 Chevrolet Tavera

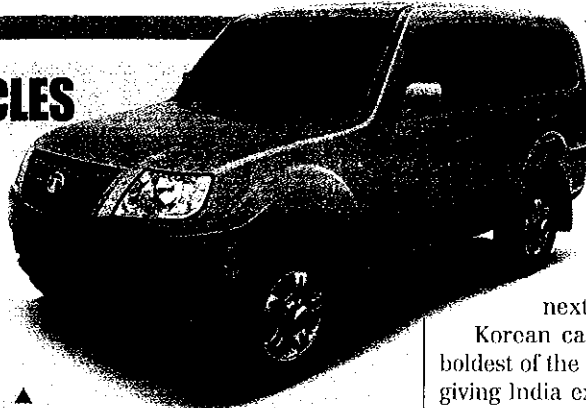
MAHINDRA-RENAULT LOGAN MCV

Rs 6-8.5 lakh
 (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH
 (mm): 4450x1993x 1640;
 1.4-litre, 75 bhp and 1.6-
 litre, 85 bhp petrol; 1.5-
 litre, 65 bhp dCi diesel

USP: Genuine seven-seater
 at an affordable price.
 Gives great utility with low
 running costs.

To compete with: Hyundai
 Verna, Maruti SX4, Honda
 City, Chevrolet Tavera and
 Toyota Innova



TATA SUMO GRANDE

Rs 6.55-7.49 lakh

Specifications: 2.2 litre diesel
 USP: An aesthetically better Sumo
 combines the looks of an SUV with the
 comforts of a family car. High torque
 ensures smoothness in stop-start traffic.
 To compete with: Chevrolet Tavera,
 Mahindra Bolero etc



2008 but will also expand it at both ends.
 For Hyundai, it will be the start of the i generation as further models in this series will be launched over the next couple of years. The Korean car maker has been the boldest of the foreign car companies, giving India exclusive production for the third model in its global line-up, a trend that is being taken up by more of the companies. M&M has the Ingenio, a homegrown utility vehicle much in the mould of the Innova while Toyota itself will have a quiet 2008 with the new Corolla before it steps on the gas with its own small car, which I am presuming will be like the A-star. Mitsubishi has often announced its intentions to be reckoned amongst the top car makers in the world but for that it needs volumes, which it has often said will come from India. Now is the time to get a move on and I

hope to be hearing some announcements from them as well. The French brigade is conspicuous by its absence with Renault being the only serious player in the country but that should change in 2008 as well. Its own plant will get under construction this year and till then it will rely on completely built units as well as the Logan range to get a feel of the market. The next vehicle in the Logan range, the MCV is ideal for India as it provides a small seven-seater option and should be welcome for both the large family as well as the inter-city travellers.

With the Tata people's car now a reality and the Bajaj-Renault small car on the horizon, what does need to change rapidly is the availability of space to drive as well as park the cars—and that will be the biggest challenge of the year, apart from deciding which of the new models to go for.

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 Auto Bild India

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

Rs 20-25 lakh (approx)

Specifications: LxWxH (mm):
 4430x1850x1.69; 2 litre
 petrol, 197 bhp; 2 litre
 diesel, 170 bhp

USP: A brand new SUV des-
 tined for India. Looks smart,
 versatile interiors offer bene-
 fits of a van.

To compete with: Ford
 Endeavour, Honda CR-V



SUVs

CHEVROLET CAPTIVA

Rs 18 lakh

Specifications: LxWxH (mm): 4635x1850x 1755;
 2 litre, 150 bhp diesel engine; automatic,
 manual front and all wheel drive

USP: Seven-seater true blue SUV with
 common rail diesel engine and contem-
 porary looks. Good off road capability as
 well as on-road panache.

To compete with: Nissan X-trail,
 Honda CR-V

