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WINNERS ALL

After two days of intense deliberation at the MMRT, we have the winners of the Times Auto Awards 2017 in partnership with evo India and Fast Bikes India



THE AWARDS

Completing a full decade this year, the Times Auto Awards has only gotten bigger and better

FROM A CHOICE OF A FEW MODELS FROM a few manufacturers, on the eve of the 14th Auto Expo, the number of global car makers that now do business in our country is huge. Naturally, at the end of 2017, when we all sat down to figure out which car and which two-wheeler stood out over its pack, the list was long and illustrious.

The Times Auto Awards, in its tenth year and associated with **evo India** and **Fast Bikes India** for the past two years, seeks to recognise the best of this rapidly growing industry. To win this most prestigious and coveted of awards, the game the manufacturers have to play is one of pushing boundaries and exceeding expectations.

Like each of the years that have gone by, this year too an elite jury were burdened with the onerous task of sorting the year's best from the rest over two days of exhaustive evaluation at the Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT) in Chennai. With no less than 57 four-wheelers spread across segments and body styles and 43 two-wheelers ranging from commuters to step through and superbikes, the jury had its task cut out. As with every one of the past ten years however, the jury once again rose to the challenge of sorting the best from the rest. Over the course of two full days of intense evaluation, no aspect of the contenders were ignored. From mechanical prowess to performance, handling, comfort, safety and overall value-for-money, every single aspect of a vehicle – four or two-wheeler – was put to the test. At the end, after much debate and discussion and immense fun, the jury came out with its verdict, choosing the names that would win the prestigious trophy while the others would have to come back again next year.

THE JURY



SIRISH CHANDRAN

Editorial director of **evo India** and **Fast Bikes India**, Sirish heads Project GTO Publishing, India's youngest media start up. An automotive journalist with nearly two decades of experience he is a motorsport enthusiast who still dabbles in races and rallies while being active on track days.



ADIL JAL DARUKHANAWALA

A man who needs no introduction, Adil has been the man behind many of India's automotive titles and today heads a team of enthusiasts who bring out India's youngest and fastest growing two-wheeler magazine **Fast Bikes India**. He's also editor-at-large for **evo India**.



ANINDA SARDAR

Assistant editor of **evo India** and **Fast Bikes India**, Aninda's expertise lies in evaluating cars and bikes from a balanced perspective. Driven by the heart and the head in equal measure, he believes that the best vehicles are those that bridge the gap between enthusiast and consumer.



VICKY CHANDHOK

Managing partner at Chennai-based WSRF, Vicky has been a delegate to the FIA World Motor Sports Council and president of the Indian ASN – the FMSCI. He is a permanent trustee of the Madras Motor Sports Trust and is now actively involved in the FIA APRC series.



AKSHAI VARDE

The man behind Vardenchi Choppers, Akshai is devoted to his custom building business. He is a passionate bike and car enthusiast with a keen eye for detail and engineering aspects that often spell the difference between a good vehicle, and a great one.



ANINDITH REDDY

That this MRF Formula 1600 and two-time JK National Racing Champion should be on the jury of a car awards is a given. But what people don't know is that he is also a bike enthusiast par excellence, helping to add a motorsport angle to our jury.



BYRAM GODREJ

One of India's foremost rally driver-cum-tuner, Byram was the driving force behind the development of the Polo for Indian rallying. A solid technical mind he now tunes sports cars and builds crazy-fast Evos. Byram is also contributing editor for **evo India**.



HARISH SAMTANI

The founder of Stereovision, Harish is a keen motorsport enthusiast. He has participated in several rallies and circuit races in the past and with his vast experience of motorsport has been a contributor to reputed publications like the Times of India.



SUDHIR SHARMA

The founder and chief executive of INDI Design, Sudhir believes that the 'brand is the business'. Over 21 years, Sudhir has helped several companies undergo brand transformation, including Bajaj Auto.



THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Separating the best from the rest is easier said than done. At the Times Auto Awards we have a very thorough and transparent procedure

WITH A FIRM EMPHASIS ON credibility and integrity, a fool proof evaluation process had been crafted for the jury members of the Times Auto Awards in association with **evo India** and **Fast Bikes India**. Two full days had been set aside for the jury to put the four-wheelers and two-wheelers through intensive testing and evaluation on the 3.7km long Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT) in Chennai.

To keep the playing field level and to remove any ambiguity, vehicles that were not sent for evaluation were summarily disqualified. In effect, this ensured that all jury members evaluated the same vehicles.

Although conducted on a race track to provide the jury with a fully-controlled and safe testing environment, this evaluation process had less to do with outright speed and more to do with

the jury member's area of expertise. As a result, while motorsport enthusiasts concentrated on dynamic abilities and performance, vehicle design experts focused on design. Industry stalwarts looked at engineering, craftsmanship and repairability while other members evaluated the contender for its overall value proposition. In each category, the jury members ranked the contenders in descending order with the winner of each category becoming the contender for the coveted overall Car of the Year and Two-Wheeler of the Year awards, which would be decided on the basis of points allotted to each contender by the jury members.

Needless to say, the winner of the overall Car of the Year award and the Two-Wheeler of the Year award would be the one with the maximum points.

Helping us ensure complete transparency and fairness in our evaluation process was our validator, Metric Global, who did the final collation of all votes and points accorded by each jury member.

SUV OF THE YEAR

JEEP COMPASS

To say the Jeep Compass is a transformational product would be the understatement of the decade. The Compass has single-handedly turned around the fortunes of FCA in India, pumped fresh vigour into the dealer network and wowed customers with its blend of fantastic styling, brilliant dynamics, great interiors and true-to-its-roots Jeep DNA. Capable, both on road and off road, the Compass is a brilliant product that also showcases Indian manufacturing prowess to the rest of the world, the Ranjangaon plant producing all right-hand drive Compasses for the world.

HATCHBACK OF THE YEAR

MARUTI SUZUKI IGNIS

The Ignis is a brave car from Maruti Suzuki, what with its unconventional styling. But underneath those clothes lies a perfect city car – surprisingly spacious, ridiculously easy to manoeuvre, with the option of an automated manual gearbox and – what our jury found to their surprise – fun to drive as well. Aimed at the millennial, the Ignis offers style and panache but with the same core values of dependability, value-for-money and frugality that Maruti Suzuki has excelled in throughout its thirty-plus years of existence. A deserving Hatchback of the Year winner.

PREMIUM SEDAN OF THE YEAR

HYUNDAI VERNA

Now in its 3rd generation in India, the new Hyundai Verna represents a massive leap forward on the dynamic front while improving on styling, features, performance and refinement. With its choice of efficient yet powerful diesel and petrol engines, its offer of automatic transmissions for both diesel and petrol variants and extensive equipment list, the Verna has always been a very difficult package to better. And now, with Hyundai having improved the vehicle in the only department where rivals bested it, it has become unbeatable, picking up the Premium Sedan of the Year gong.

COMPACT SEDAN OF THE YEAR

MARUTI SUZUKI DZIRE

Not for nothing is the Compact Sedan class also called the Dzire category. This new Dzire takes everything that Indians loved about the outgoing model and made it better. The light weight means better power and fuel efficiency, there's more space and efficiency, better driving dynamics, nicer interiors, nicer exterior styling – it is better in all respects and easily trounces the competition. The fact that there has been a huge jump in build quality, choice of materials and fit and finish levels only helps cement the Dzire's reputation of offering exceptional value. Therefore, our Compact Sedan of the Year.

COMPACT SUV OF THE YEAR

TATA NEXON

The Nexon might be late to the party but that's actually its trump card. Tata Motors has understood what Indian buyers want in this segment and delivered with strong engines, good interiors, excellent road manners, great space and wrapped it all up in absolutely striking lines that turns heads twenty to the dozen. The Nexon is also proof that Indian design and manufacturing have come of age with Tata Motors having taken a huge leap forward on the design front. Capable, good looking and practical, the Tata Nexon therefore is our Compact SUV of the Year.

UV/MPV OF THE YEAR

TATA HEXA

Marrying the best parts of an SUV with the space and practicality of an MPV, the Hexa really is in a class of its own. It is comfortable but has that rugged feel of an SUV from behind the wheel, it can take seven people but with 4x4 engaged it can climb up snow-covered Himalayan passes. It has a powerful engine with an automatic transmission. It has appropriately muscular styling and the biggest wheels in its class. It is the best of all worlds. Not to forget, it's incredibly comfortable, spacious and well-loaded too. There's no doubt that the Hexa is a deserving winner of the UV/MPV of the Year category.

DESIGN OF THE YEAR

TATA NEXON

An obvious and unanimous winner of this category, Pratap Bose and his teams spread across UK, Italy and Pune have turned out an absolute stunner in the Nexon and the fact that from concept to reality hardly anything has changed on this compact SUV is a major statement of the pre-eminence design is getting at Tata Motors.





PERFORMANCE / SPORTSCAR OF THE YEAR

While speed and performance are critical, sportscars are all about balance, precision, engagement and the seat-of-the-pants feel and nothing delivers that sensory thrill more than the new Porsche 718 Cayman. It may only have a 2-litre motor but thanks to turbo charging and the beautiful chassis the Cayman is an utter joy, whether on road or on track. And for the first time a Porsche is sensibly priced, adding the cherry of affordability (relatively of course) to the cake.

P O R S C H E 7 1 8 C A Y M A N

LUXURY SEDAN OF THE YEAR

For 20 years the Mercedes-Benz E-Class has set the benchmark for luxury in India and with this new generation, Mercedes shifts the goal posts by a huge margin. Debuting in long wheelbase form the new E has acres of space, phenomenal interiors, a new diesel engine, fantastic comfort and is still good fun to drive. A complete luxury package, the new E pushes boundaries way beyond what you would imagine.



M E R C E D E S - B E N Z E - C L A S S

S K O D A O C T A V I A R S



THRILL OF DRIVING AWARD

RS! Two alphabets that put a mighty wide smile on the face of any enthusiast. In terms of price to performance, or smiles per horsepower nothing comes close to the Skoda Octavia RS. It is all the car you will ever need with performance, space, practicality, features – everything. And the best part is that it doesn't ground its belly on speedbreakers. What else can one ask for?

L A N D R O V E R D I S C O V E R Y

LUXURY SUV OF THE YEAR

The Discovery is the SUV that crossed tropical jungles and mighty rivers of the iconic Camel Trophy events, the SUV that conquered the Dakar and now, in its latest generation, has lost none of those mighty 4x4 capabilities while adding massively on the luxury quotient. This is one luxury SUV that doesn't mind going through hell.



MOTORSPORT AWARD OF THE YEAR

GAURAV GILL

Gaurav Gill is not just India's best rally driver, having won the INRC for a record fifth time this year, or just Asia's best rally driver but he is among the best rally drivers in the entire Asia Pacific region having won the APRC title for a third time in 2017. A guy who deserves to head to Europe and fight it out with the best rally drivers in the world in WRC, Gaurav Gill is a man on the charge and wins our Motorsport Award for the second year in a row.



MOTORSPORT AWARD OF THE YEAR

MAHINDRA RACING

It's rare to hear the Indian national anthem play out at international race meets but Mahindra Racing has been ensuring exactly that by winning races in the all-electric Formula E championship against the best and strongest teams in the world. Nobody gave them a chance but having finished second runner up in Season 4 they're now firmly in the championship hunt in season 5, flying the flag for the nation.



CAR MAKER OF THE YEAR

MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA LTD

Once known for its sensible and practical products, Maruti Suzuki has now completely reinvented itself. To that end, even the consumer experience has been separated with those looking for a premium experience being funnelled to the Nexa outlets while the rest make a beeline for the new Maruti Suzuki Arena chain. A company that has hugely improved its portfolio and introduced new platforms, Maruti Suzuki is our Car Maker of the Year.



LUXURY CAR MAKER OF THE YEAR

MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA LTD

The first luxury car maker to enter the Indian market, Mercedes-Benz is one company that has continually improved its product line up. And this year was no different, with the brand introducing not just sensibly luxurious products but also starting off on a path of local assembly of products that gives impetus to the Indian government's Make-in-India policy. Not to forget the incredible performance cars that it has for the power hungry among us.



CAR OF THE YEAR

TATA NEXON

The first Tata Motors car to be offered in the compact SUV segment and, oh boy, what a mark it has made! The Design of the Year also bags the Car of the Year crown

THE INDIAN SUV MARKET IS GROWING AT an extremely fast rate with 32 per cent of the total car market share dominated by SUVs. Out of the total SUV sales, the compact SUVs and crossovers account for 39 per cent. Maruti Suzuki, Ford and Hyundai had already made their mark and received huge success in the compact SUV segment with their Vitara Brezza, EcoSport and Creta respectively. How could our homebred manufacturer, Tata, stay away from the limelight? That's how the Nexon was born.

The Nexon marks a new era at the venerable Tata Motors – a compact SUV that takes on the best in the world and comes out on top. This is a product that doesn't offer you par for the course but sets the benchmark with its quality, its ride and handling balance, its interiors and most of all its styling while at the same time not forgetting that value for money factor that has always been crucial with Tata Motors.

What is design if it does not evoke an emotional response? That's something the Tata Motors design team have been able to evoke brilliantly with the Nexon and all the new generation cars rolling out of their Pune facility. There is hardly anything that looks as striking and abstract as the Nexon in its price bracket. The Nexon

looks eye catching, has those typical Tata Motors styling cues and looks like a concept car that rolled off the Expo floors directly into the showrooms. Its just been a couple of months since the Nexon was launched and the car is already making a strong presence felt on roads, marking a strong revival for Tata Motors.

The Nexon is powered with two new turbocharged engines – a 3-cylinder, 1198cc petrol and a 4-cylinder, 1497cc diesel unit. Both the motors make similar power output of 108.49bhp while the peak torque is 170Nm and 260Nm for the petrol and diesel, respectively.

What makes us fall in love with the Nexon is the way it drives. Ride quality has been a USP of Tata cars since the Indica days but the Nexon sets a new benchmark on this front. The suspension setup provides a pliant ride at all speeds while possessing the ability to take over everything from speedbreakers to mild off-road terrain without a fuss. What is incredible is that with proper attention to a driver's needs, the Nexon also turned out to be an excellent handler around the MMRT. All in all, a great package that fuses great design with excellent practicality and good performance and dynamics. A natural winner of the title of overall Car of the Year. ☒