

UNSTOPPABLE

1965 AUTONOVA FAM

Want to know the father of all MPVs? Meet the Autonova FAM done by three students in the early 1960s. The Matra Renault Espace, the Chrysler Minivans, even Giugiaro's Megagamma were to materialise almost a decade later.


Upright stance, wheels at extreme corners, large glazed area, max seating and utility room, the 1965 Autonova FAM had it all.



Pic: Adil Jal Daruchanawla



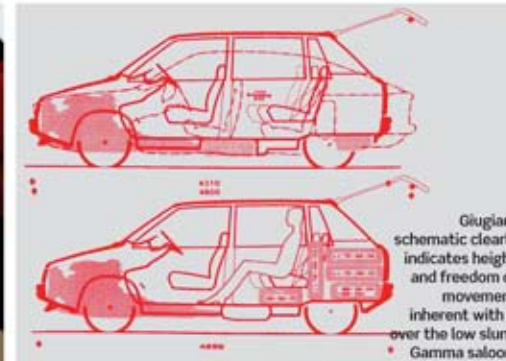
Edition 11 of a special series by
APOLLO TYRES LTD.



APOLLO TYRES LTD.

UNSTOPPABLE

Never wary of progress, never skeptical about success,
Never scared of challenges, never tired of trying.
Every step of the way we travel with our customers
On the "unstoppable" journey to success.



Many, if not most, automotive historians have always had the out of sight and out of mind syndrome on many an innovation and invention. The higher the profile of the man who did a vehicle which stands in memory, inadvertently he or his firm are credited with ushering in the concept.

Something similar afflicts most historians when it comes to the MPV, a class of car which today no automobile maker can NOT afford to miss in its model line-up. MPV sales in the world hover around the three and a half to four million units per annum mark these days and even in India cars like the brilliant Toyota Innova reflect the growing importance of such a segment of practical automobile.

The first production MPV came from Renault with its Espace, almost at around the same time that Chrysler debuted its successful Minivan series on the other side of the Atlantic. While motor sport and aerospace major Matra designed the Espace, the Minivan was the result of the unique American

way of life which spawned a vehicle of its class. The Espace and the Minivan have both gone on to break sales records and continue unabated as the MPV leaders in Europe and North America to this day.

There is a line of thought which suggests that noted Italian car designer Giorgetto Giugiaro did the very first MPV concept via the Italdesign Megagamma in 1978. It is clear that Giugiaro was exploring the means to transcend the traditional parameter of length for determining a vehicle's status. Using the production Lancia Gamma platform as the starting block, Giugiaro altered the dimensions, chopping off the overhangs in such way as to condense total vehicle length from the original 4600mm to 4310mm. It is said that he totally revolutionised the look by raising the height from 1370mm to 1617mm delivering an unusually tallish stance. However this was clothed in swelter lines which while giving it an elegant exterior, showed the way forward for a completely new segment of car offering practical

appeal and enjoyment to many families essentially because of its much higher and more upright seat position. Factor in the flat floor enabling complete freedom of movement, delivering, in Giugiaro's own words: "an apartment on wheels."

However the rightful credit for penning the first genuine take on the modern day unstoppable MPV has to be the Autonova FAM which was shown at the 1965 Frankfurt Motor Show. Created by two students at the HfG design school Michael Conrad and Pio Mazu together with automobile critic Fritz Busch, this 3.5 metre long vehicle was not only compact from the outside and highly manoeuvrable but thanks to its upright seating positions and collapsible individual seats brought about the first instance of what we today tend to term flexi-seats. The Autonova used fibreglass floors and fenders but the rest was all unit construction and in many ways was the true forerunner of the modern day Multi Purpose Vehicle.

Adil Jal Darukhanawala

