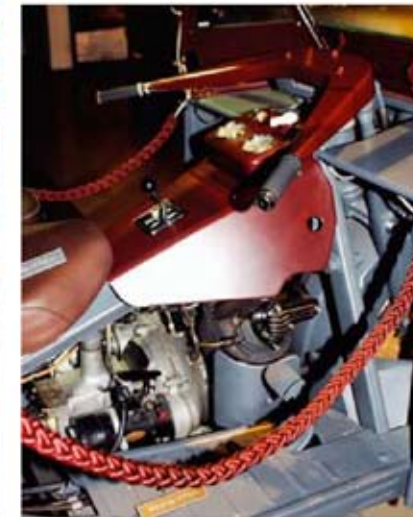


unstoppable

MAZDA'S TEMPO!

This is a vehicle as much about common sense as the obvious bulk. Just wonder how one of these would have fared on Indian roads? Pretty well for a start!!





Think of it as necessity being the mother of all invention but in the years after the second world war as Japan began to get to grips with rebuilding itself, ideas clever and crazy, zany and outlandish to perfectly sane and simple began making their presence felt on the streets of the Land of the Rising Sun.

Everyone knows the stature of the Japanese in the global automotive firmament but all this actually began to roll from the 1950s. Even though a few inventors and entrepreneurs made one-off cars in the 1920s and 1930s, home-bred Japanese vehicle manufacturers were all but non-existent till just before the start of World War II. Nissan was the first off the block followed by Toyota (yes note the 'd' instead of the 'f') who made a few cars for sale to the public followed by beefed up models for the Imperial Japanese Army's war effort. Inspiration to these two pioneer marques came from England and the US. Nissan obviously looking to Austin and Morris for hints and direction while Toyota was more keyed in to Yankee tastes. And the first offerings of both marques displayed this borrowed lineage quite glaringly.

Just as Europe was rebuilding itself and vehicles to get the job done displayed an overwhelming diverse trend, so was the case in Japan as well. While Nissan and Toyota continued to improvise on their pre-war offerings and build themselves up, other marques started to work in their own ingenuity in design and development of transportation concepts. Firms such as Fuji Heavy Industries, Mitsubishi Motors, Daihatsu (this firm was noted for its three-wheelers even before the war), Mizuno and others began to dabble in the realm of vehicles serving the dual purpose of people movement along with load haulage. In doing so, these makers tried to do more with less, in effect making do with a wheel less to churn out three-wheeled personal mobility vehicles as well as mini-load haulers. The Fujicabin (forerunner of the Subarus), the Daihatsu Bees and Midgets plus some lesser known brands made vehicles which suited the terrain then and



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also the immediate vehicular needs of a Japan in rebuild mode.

One major marque though, bucked this trend with a very large capacity (notably with Japan in mind) three-wheeler and this was Toyo Kogyo whom we know of as the maker of the Mazda brand of cars. Large capacity stood not just for engine size but for its large load bed, payload capability and also its huge build. It was a complete departure from the prevailing Japanese philosophy of small and nifty and therefore it stood out rather distinctively from the rest.

Toyo Kogyo used to make small weird three-wheelers but when they made this large three-wheeler that you see depicted as the subject of this Unstoppable edition, it clearly was a departure from the standard Japanese vehicle. I have termed this vehicle as Mazda's Tempo – remember the three-wheeled Hanscar which was made in India by Bajaj Tempo – and it was clearly in the same mould. However I think that the

Japanese did themselves a big disservice by not exhibiting the performance of this vehicle because it was a more rational design than the Hanscar with its unwieldy engine placement above the leading singleton front wheel and decidedly nose-heavy stance. The Mazda (our subject vehicle forms part of the permanent display in the Toyota Automotive Museum in Toyota city, Japan) had a vee-twin motor with a four-speed gearbox placed directly behind the front wheel and below the driver's seat making for a better planted vehicle with top notch suspension to boot. And where the original Tempo Hanscar was front wheel drive (with its own loads on the steering and the handling), the Toyo Kogyo effort made do with a proper rear wheel drive layout complete with a proper differential so that the load lugging ability was properly built in. Also as you can gauge from the images of the vehicle pictured here, the Mazda three-wheeled pick-up was designed to take a near 1.5 tonne load capability and had the footwear to match. Factor in conventional drum brakes and the Mazda would have done the job in most cases in the orderly Japanese manner we have come to know of.

Probably the one area, where the quirky nature of such a large three-wheeled pick-up did make its presence felt was in the central driving position which came with a motorcycle-type of handlebar arrangement with a stick shift for the transmission. The driver / rider's seat was perched atop a central tunnel with the man at the controls being seated in motorcycle fashion. This was a rather interesting departure from the Tempo Hanscar which came with a steering wheel.

In present day India, small sub-one-tonne three-wheelers are now making way for four-wheeled versions. And this is exactly what happened to the Mazda load trike then – Toyo Kogyo superseding it with a four-wheeled pick-up by the early 1960s. However in the rebuilding of Japan in the tough period of the 1950s, the Mazda was well high unstoppable.

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