

Heir apparents

Pictures: Suresh Narayanan



The Alto K10 and the new Eon have their sights set on the throne occupied by the standard, and now old in the tooth, Alto. So, which one is better poised to be the new king of sales

The Alto is India's favourite car. And we all know why – its low purchase price, fantastic fuel economy and the ease of getting it sorted, if anything were to go wrong are a few but telling reasons. There's

however another reason – the lack of options. Not that one couldn't buy other cars for similar money give or take a few thousands; there's the Nano, the Spark and even the Santro, but then none really ticked all the right boxes.

Naturally then, Maruti had to do something and out came the Alto K10. It had a better engine, more equipment and overall a more upmarket positioning. It was the car for the young. It's not taken over the mantle from the

standard Alto yet; something the second largest car maker Hyundai thinks its latest can. Say hello to the Eon; a properly good looking car that promises to check everything we said about the Alto in the opening statement. So,

does it? And does it do it better than the K10?

Old vs new

The Alto K10 might be a reasonably recent launch, but next to the Eon it shows its roots. Everything from its exterior design; be it the panels, the door

handles, the lack of lines to the lights look as they belong to a decade gone by.

The Eon on the other hand looks completely modern. It looks newer than its own sibling, the i20, in fact! Then once you step inside, the differences are just too huge to handle. The K10 is all grey, and a boring grey at

that. One look at the plastic all round and you know it has been built to a cost. It has no sense of opulence at all.

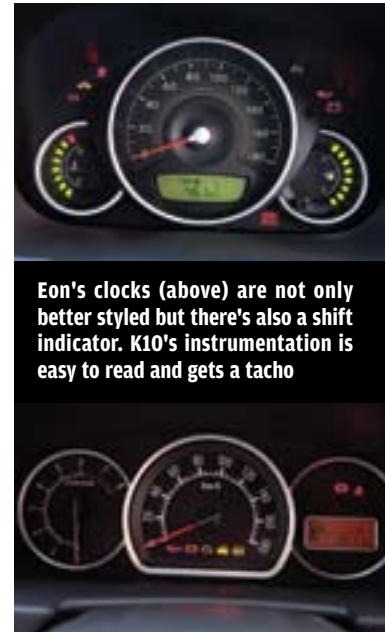
Hyundai then has done a brilliant job with the Eon. Not only is the design of the interiors contemporary; the colour combination, the plastics, the ergonomics and even the operability of

switches and knobs is so much better on the Eon. It clearly feels like one is inside a car that belongs to a segment above. And that alone should swing a lot of buyers in its direction.

In terms of space there's not much to choose between the two. Yes, the Eon has more headroom all round for it is a tall boy design



EON SPORTZ



Eon's clocks (above) are not only better styled but there's also a shift indicator. K10's instrumentation is easy to read and gets a tachometer

The Hyundai's interiors (left) are pleasant, scream of quality and are better ergonomically as well compared to those of the Alto K10

(courtesy it being based on the Santro). But this apart, in terms of usable kneeroom at the back (read AUTO BILD INDIA's standard 1m measurement), both the K10 and the Eon are identical. The Eon though does offer more shoulder room, both front and back, and is in fact roomier up front. It also has a bigger boot. Seating again is more comfortable on the Hyundai, and so is getting in and out. The latter is thanks to wider opening doors and a higher, more comfortable ingress/egress height.

Motoring equation

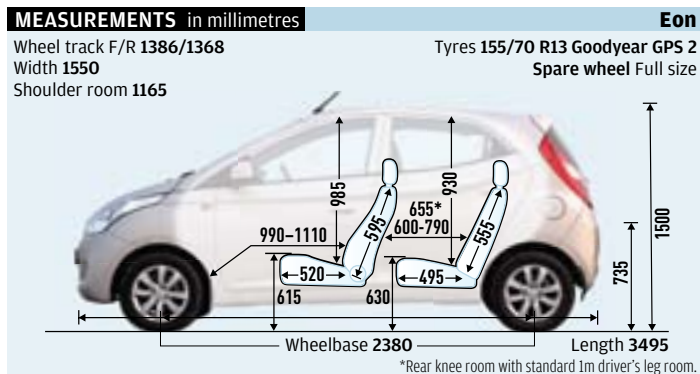
The Eon clearly steam rolls the

Alto in the bout above, but begin driving, and the Alto is the one that gets you hooked (in relative terms, of course). Now, if you are one who has no passion for driving, the difference won't matter much. Both the Alto and the Eon have reasonably light steering and clutch, easy to reach gear shifters that have decent shift quality as well. The brake feel and pick up too is something that works unobtrusively on both cars. So in that sense, for a regular city commuter it doesn't really matter which one you buy in terms of drive, but do remember, the Eon does get very vibey and irritatingly so even for the non-passionate individual.

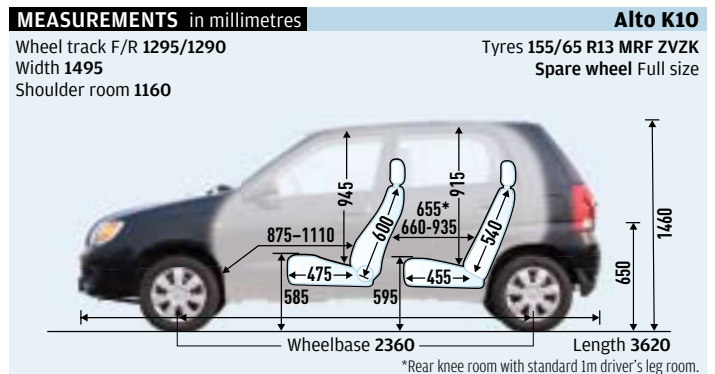


ALTO K10 VXI

On the K10 everything seems a tad too close. Plus, the plastics look cheap and the design takes you back a decade, if not more. Fit and finish though is acceptable



The Hyundai Eon sits on a larger wheelbase and has wider track lengths as well. The end result is slightly more room compared to the Maruti



The Alto K10 is only longer than the standard Alto while all other dimensions remain same. It is roomier though, thanks to intelligently designed front seats

Be it in a straight line or around a bend, the K10 is the more competent car



The 998cc engine is the highlight of the K10 package. Not only is it peppy, it's also very fuel efficient



Besides the boring ambience, room and seating comfort aren't good either



Cupholders and little stowage on the central tunnel are handy

However, if you like driving but are constricted by a budget, the Alto is clearly the one that's more exciting. It has the better engine; one that revs more easily and is a lot more spirited than the Eon. Be it dumping the clutch for a

quick getaway from a traffic light or simply accelerating through the gears to overtake, the K10 is the lighter of the two on its feet. The Eon feels strained in comparison. The engine sounds coarse when revved hard, plus



Eon's 814cc engine is basically the Santro engine, but minus one cylinder. It's only an average performer







There's more headroom here but the kneeroom is near identical to the K10



Stowage spaces on the Eon are more and more thoughtfully designed

| ENGINE | HYUNDAI | MARUTI SUZUKI |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Made of | All aluminium | All aluminium |
| Capacity | 814cc | 998cc |
| Cylinders | 3 cyl, inline | 3 cyl, inline |
| Installation | Transverse | Transverse |
| Valvetrain | 3 valves/cyl, SOHC | 4 valves/cyl, DOHC |
| Bore x stroke | 67.0mmx77.0mm | 73.0mmx79.5mm |
| Max power | 56bhp@5500rpm | 68bhp@6200rpm |
| Max torque | 74Nm@4000rpm | 90Nm@3500rpm |
| Max engine speed | 6000rpm | 6300rpm |
| Specific output | 69bhp/litre | 68bhp/litre |
| P-t-W | 72bhp/tonne | 88bhp/tonne |
| Gearbox | 5-speed manual | 5-speed manual |
| Driven wheels | FWD | FWD |
| Fuel efficiency (ARAI) | 21.1kmpl | 20.2kmpl |

| TESTED | HYUNDAI | MARUTI SUZUKI |
|--|----------|---------------|
| Acceleration | | |
| 0-60kmph  | 5.7s | 5.8s |
| 0-80kmph | 10.5s | 9.6s |
| 0-100kmph | 17.0s | 15.4s |
| 0-120kmph | 30.1s | 23.5s |
| Top speed | 140kmph | 150kmph |
| Driveability | | |
| 30-80kmph | 11.9s | 10.2s |
| 40-100kmph | 23.9s | 22.6s |
| 80-120kmph | 26.3s | 23.3s |
| Braking | | |
| 80-0kmph  | 36.9m | 34.2m |
| 100-0kmph | 58.1m | 54.6m |
| In cabin noise | | |
| At 50kmph  | 65db | 66db |
| At 100kmph | 72db | 72db |
| At 130kmph | 73db | 75db |
| Co2 | 140g/km | 136g/km |
| Fuel efficiency  | 16.7kmpl | 17.2kmpl |



The angle of the picture might suggest otherwise, but the truth is, the Eon is the larger, taller car between the two. It also looks smarter of the two in the flesh

there are constant vibrations that can be felt on the gear shifter as well as the pedals, which get bothersome soon.

The steering too, feels better on the Alto when driving aggressively. Now, there's not much feedback from either

steering wheels, but the Alto's is more predictable and direct compared to the Eon. The same holds true for handling. The Alto corners flatter in comparison to the Eon, and feels more willing and controllable to chuck harder into bends. The Eon on

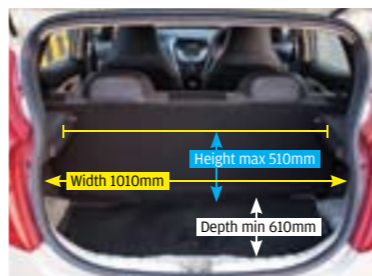
the other hand feels soggy and then it rolls around corners more too. Moreover, if the surface is undulating, the Eon also tends to wallow more.

However, if you are going to be using these cars for everyday day work related commute, which we believe, will be their primary roles, the Eon's better ride quality will find favour with most. The Hyundai's low speed ride, in particular, is better; it feels like a bigger, more planted car in comparison to the Alto. The bump absorption is plusher and there's little vibration or noise that creeps into the cabin. The K10 in comparison feels like a lighter car that's finding it difficult to cope with the road irregularities. It's jumpier and noisier compared to the Eon.

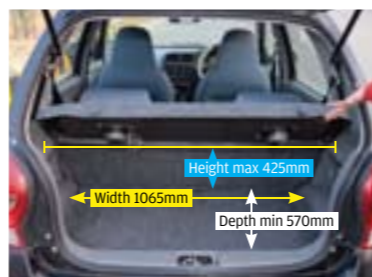
The soft setup, as it's said,

| BODY | HYUNDAI | MARUTI SUZUKI |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Chassis | Monocoque | Monocoque |
| No of seats | 5 | 5 |
| Suspension F/R | McPherson struts with anti-roll bar/ torsion beam axle | McPherson struts with anti roll bar/ three link rigid axle |
| Brakes F/R | Discs/drums | Ventilated discs/drums |
| Wheels | 5.0Jx13in | 5.0Jx13in |
| Steering | Rack & pinion with power assist | Rack & pinion with power assist |
| Turning circle dia | 9.1m | 9.2m |
| Fuel | Petrol | Petrol |
| Tank capacity | 32 litres | 35 litres |
| Boot space | 215 litres | 117 litres |
| Kerb weight | 772kg | 765kg |

| EQUIPMENT | HYUNDAI | MARUTI SUZUKI |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Model | Eon Sportz | Alto K10 Vxi |
| Airbags | Driver side | None |
| ABS/ESP | No/No | No/No |
| AC/climate control | Air conditioning | Air conditioning |
| Power windows | Front doors only | Front doors only |
| CD/MP3 player | Yes | No |
| Sun roof | No | No |
| Xenon lamps | No | No |
| Warranty | 2years/ unlimited km | 3 years/60,000km |
| PRICE (OTR, Delhi) | Rs 4.09 lakh | Rs 3.54 lakh |



The Eon has a bigger, more usable boot measuring 215 litres (above), compared to 117 litres of the Alto (below)



can only take you so far. So, it's not surprising that the Eon feels more out of shape and less stable compared to the K10 on the same section of road at speeds of over 80kmph. In fact, the sense of

speed as a result is heightened more on the Eon than the K10. So, when cruising at speeds close to 100kmph, the Alto feels a lot more confident and one doesn't mind pushing it.

FINAL PLACING

1 295 POINTS
Hyundai Eon Sportz
 Eon's strength is its modernity in terms of design, quality and ergonomics. It's better equipped too in the trims we have on test here.

MOST COMFORTABLE CAR 94/200 points

2 293 POINTS
Maruti Suzuki Alto K10 Vxi
 The Alto has a spunky engine and it might still be a better bet if you seriously like driving. But for everything else, the Eon is the car.

BEST DRIVER'S CAR 123/200 points

'Best driver's car' and 'most comfortable car' placings are specific to this test only

SCORECARD

| | Max Points | HYUNDAI | MARUTI SUZUKI |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| BODY | | | |
| Front Space | 15 | 6 | 5 |
| Rear space | 15 | 5 | 5 |
| Feeling of space/ambience | 10 | 5 | 4 |
| Boot space/flexibility | 15 | 8 | 7 |
| Visibility | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Feel of quality | 15 | 9 | 7 |
| Payload | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Safety | 20 | 2 | 1 |
| Intermediate results | 100 | 42 | 36 |
| DRIVE | | | |
| Acceleration | 15 | 5 | 6 |
| Top speed | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| Driveability | 10 | 4 | 4 |
| Engine characteristics | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Gearbox | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Fuel efficiency | 40 | 30 | 31 |
| Range | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Environment | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| Intermediate results | 100 | 60 | 63 |
| COMFORT | | | |
| Ride quality | 30 | 18 | 16 |
| Front seats/ingress | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| Rear seat/ingress | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Driving noise | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Handling | 15 | 7 | 8 |
| Comfort equipment | 15 | 4 | 2 |
| Operability | 10 | 6 | 4 |
| Intermediate results | 100 | 52 | 46 |
| DYNAMICS | | | |
| Steering response | 15 | 8 | 8 |
| Directional stability | 15 | 7 | 7 |
| Manoeuvrability | 20 | 18 | 19 |
| Braking | 25 | 14 | 15 |
| Grip | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Turning circle | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Intermediate results | 100 | 67 | 69 |
| TEST RESULTS | 400 | 221 | 214 |
| COST | | | |
| Price | 60 | 44 | 51 |
| Resale | 20 | 16 | 18 |
| Warranty | 20 | 14 | 10 |
| Intermediate results | 100 | 74 | 79 |
| TOTAL | 500 | 295 | 293 |
| Final position | | 1 | 2 |

The AUTO BILD points system at work

Clear winner, fair grading - cars are rated over 500 points, with 100 points for each section. Also, each section focuses on a single aspect for easier understanding

Space wise, the Eon offers more particularly at the front. It has more head and shoulder room. Ditto at the rear. But, the kneeroom for both at the rear is near identical. The Eon though has a bigger boot. Moreover, the overall quality is much better and so is the ambience, not to mention with a single airbag meant only for the driver, it scores more here too.

The Drive head was always going to go Alto K10's way. It does have the better engine, after all. Not only is the K10 quicker off the line by close to two seconds in the run upto 100kmph, it also has a significantly higher top speed. Even in-gear times are better, making the K10 more driveable no matter what gear you choose. To top it all; it is more fuel efficient as well.

Be it ride quality, especially at slower speeds, or seating comfort, or simply getting in or out of the car for that matter, the Eon does all of it better. It also boasts of more comfort equipment and better operability too. The only area where the K10 betters the Hyundai is in the handling department. The Maruti is also more fun in this regard.

As we said, the K10 is more dynamically able. This includes things like steering response. Now, the K10's steering isn't great, but compared to the Eon it is certainly better. Given its better visibility, the K10 is also easier to drive in the city, and to park too. Surprisingly, it stops sooner too, though brake feel on both cars is similar.

As the Test Results show, the Eon is the better product. But add the Cost to the picture and the K10 strikes back with a vengeance. It almost negates the seven-point advantage of the Hyundai on lower purchase price and better resale. In the end though, the Hyundai's better warranty comes to its rescue.

Verdict

■ We have considered the most expensive versions of the two cars on test here. And as is clear from our Scorecard, even though the Eon is a much better product; be it ride, seating comfort, equipment, look and feel, boot space and most importantly, quality and value, the Alto still runs it very close. And the answer to that again lies in our Scorecard. If you look at the cost equation, it is clear even though the Alto has poorer warranty; its purchase price advantage and better resale bring it very close to winning this test. Of course, having the better engine, better handling and minutely better steering helps as well. But, in the end, it's still the Eon, the winner of this test, which makes better buying sense.

Vikrant Singh

