



A predator for sure!

For the past couple of years, Mahindra has been attempting to increase its heft in the UV market in India with multiple launches – but it has been largely unsuccessful. Barring the super-successful XUV 500 and its iterations (facelifts, engine upgrades, and a petrol avatar), all the other offerings from Mahindra in recent times has been strictly passé. The XUV set a very high benchmark for offerings from the Mahindra stables, and it has been a tough act to follow. When “code name U321” finally got a name – Marazzo (from 12 shortlisted names), interest levels were piqued and the buzz grew with each passing day (although there was sharp polarisation around the chosen name). It was helped along by the teaser images that were released by Mahindra from time to time. And when the D-day dawned, the wait was well worth it. While Mahindra has directly pitted the Marazzo against the Maruti Ertiga, it does seem to have what it takes to also challenge the Toyota Innova Crysta. It has been engineered by Mahindra’s North American Technical Centre at Michigan and Mahindra Design Valley in Chennai; it has been jointly designed by [Pininfarina](#) and Mahindra Design Studio in Mumbai.

The MPV certainly looks exciting and aggressive at the same time – at first glance, it was way better than what Mahindra has put out into the market in the past (barring the XUV, of course). Marazzo is the Basque (Catalan) word for ‘shark’ and the new MPV’s design is inspired by the feared predator of the high seas. The Marazzo is the largest vehicle from Mahindra in terms of footprint, albeit smaller than the Tata Hexa and the Innova Crysta. With a brand new (and specially designed) small oil burner under the hood powering the large frame, the obvious question is whether it is adequate (the Ertiga’s smaller engine powers a smaller frame, although ‘claimed’ seating is similar). Another question that is on everyone’s mind is: while pricing is very sharp, does it mean that the vehicle is low on features so as to match the pricing? To get answers to these burning questions, I requested Mahindra for a test drive, and the wait was very short.

Sharky looks

The Marazzo is based on an all-new platform and unique hybrid chassis by Mahindra – it is a traditional body-on-frame chassis and a monocoque mated to a front wheel drive system. While Mahindra says that they have applied for a patent on this design, the obvious question that begs to be asked is: why opt for such a complex package? Mahindra already has had stupendous success with a monocoque body in the XUV; couldn’t they have continued with the same here too? Maybe Mahindra feels that with the Marazzo, they wanted to have the efficiency of a modern monocoque as well as the long term durability that only a good old ladder chassis can promise on Indian roads. Whatever the case may be, the Marazzo is here – and from the looks of it, it is here to stay. And it starts with the key fob – it is way better than the equivalent to a small hammer that was given with the XUV.

Mahindra Marazzo – tech spec comparo

	Mahindra Marazzo	Maruti Ertiga^	Toyota Innova Crysta	Mahindra TUV 300	Tata Hexa	Honda BR-V	Renault Lodgy
Average Monthly Sales – YTD CY18	-	4,700	6,600	2,300	900	700	125
Dimensions							
Length (mm)	4585	4296	4735	4400	4788	4453	4498
Width (mm)	1866	1695	1830	1835	1903	1735	1751
Height (mm)	1774	1685	1795	1812	1791	1666	1709
Wheelbase (mm)	2760	2740	2750	2810	2850	2662	2680
Ground Clearance (mm)	200	185	193	190	200	210	174
Turning Radius (m)	5.25	5.2	5.4	5.35	5.75	5.3-5.5	5.55
Boot Space (ltr)	190	185	300	384	128	223	207
Seating (nos)	7-8	7	7-8	7	7-8	7	8
Fuel Tank (ltr)	45	45	55	60	60	42	50
Kerb Weight - Petrol (kg)	-	1135	-	-	-	1238	-
Kerb Weight - Diesel (kg)	1650	1265	1720, 1870	1650	2113, 2261	1306	1302-1366
Tyres	215/65 R16, 215/60 R17	185/65 R15	205/65 R16, 215/55 R17	215/75 R15	235/55 R19	195/60 R16	195/55 R16
Engine							
Size (ltr)	1.5	1.4, 1.3	2.7/2.4, 2.8	1.5	2.2	1.5	1.5
Fuel	D	P/D	P/D	D	D	P/D	D
Transmission	6-MT	5-MT, 4-AT/5-MT	5-MT, 6-AT/5-MT, 6-AT	6-MT, 6-AMT	6-MT, 6-AT	6-MT, 6-AT/6-MT	5-MT, 6-MT
Power (bhp)	121	93/90	166/150, 174	121, 100	148, 154	117/100	85, 110
Torque (Nm)	300	130/200	245/343, 360	280, 240	320, 400	145/200	200, 245
Fuel Efficiency (kmpl)*	17.3	17.5/24.52	9.89, 10.38/15.1, 14.29	, 18.49	14.2/13.3	15.4, 16/21.9	21.04/19.98
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – MT Petrol							
Base	-	6.70-7.06	14.65-14.7	-	-	9.50	-
Mid	-	7.83-8.45	15.87-15.92	-	-	10.70-11.64	-
Top	-	8.41-8.99	17.74-18.59	-	-	12.68	-
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – MT Diesel							
Base	9.99	9.00-9.08	15.77-15.82	8.20-8.78	12.49	10.39-11.84	8.73-9.74
Mid	10.95-12.10	9.81	17.18-17.23	9.49-9.64	14.11-16.56	12.70	10.64-11.40
Top	13.90	10.39-10.83	18.86-20.71	9.90-10.05	17.89	13.79	12.21
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – AT/AMT Petrol/Diesel							
Base	-	-	-	10.24#	-	-	-
Mid	-	8.85@	20.7	10.71#	15.35#	12.83@	-
Top	-	-	21.38	10.86#	17.72#	-	-

Source: IIFL Research *claimed #Diesel @Petrol

^ New model coming up with larger dimensions, bigger engine, more power/ features



With a transversely mounted engine, Mahindra designers have managed to unlock more space within the Marazzo – so while the length is similar to that of the XUV, there is additional room inside. Not just that, but despite being noticeably shorter in length than the Innova or the Hexa, the Marazzo has a bigger wheelbase, meaning that the cabin is more spacious – more on that later. But overall, the Marazzo is a large vehicle, and it drew curious looks – not as much from the sides or the rear, but definitely from the front.



The Marazzo's visual characteristics have been inspired by the Shark. Mahindra says that most of the exterior elements that we see on the MPV (the smoked chrome finished-shark toothed 6-slat grille with a 'U' in the middle and the Mahindra logo on top, a shark-fin antenna for the top variant, large LED tail-lamps) have been designed after some of the signature traits of the predator fish from the deep seas. Compared to the overall body, the nose or the bonnet looks small – it doesn't impact the proportions, but just that the snout is a little small, and sloping down, as opposed to the more SUV-ish stance of the new Innova or Hexa. The large headlamp unit gets projector lights with a faux LED strip on top, and turn indicators nestling at the bottom. The headlamp cluster gives a rounded edge to the overall design and blends very well to the bonnet, with a hint of muscle. The sharp styling continues into the lower end of the front bumper with the grille getting a matte-chrome finished strip and shark trunk shaped fog lamp cluster. The LED day-time running lamps (that come on as you press the key fob to open the doors) are placed on top of the foglamps and look good.



The neatly styled wing mirrors with turn indicator are positioned a little away from the main body. The slightly flared wheel arches offer a hint of muscle, as do the creases on the large expanse of sheet metal on the sides, especially the crease that runs from the front wheel arch all the way to the tail-lamp cluster at an angle. The 215/60 R17 Bridgestone Dueler-shod smart alloys (shaped like shark teeth in my test vehicle) fill the wheel well nicely, but I strongly feel that Mahindra could have offered 18-inch wheels on higher variants (lower variants get 16-inch wheels), at least as an option. While the Marazzo looks planted and well-proportioned despite the small snout, one does get an optical illusion of a larger rear end, and more than a hint of the old Innova, due to the rising shoulder line and the wide expanse of sheet metal. The sharply raked A-pillar gets a small fixed glass triangle upfront to aid visibility on turns; the blacked out B-, and C-pillars, and the partially blacked out D-pillar complete the impression of a floating roof. Chrome door handles for the top variants and a thin chrome strip accentuating the shut lines of the wide doors complete the look from the sides.



Mahindra has favoured large lamps at the rear (Xylo, XUV) – in the Marazzo, the rear is dominated by a pretty large LED tail-lamp cluster that resembles a shark's tail. So large is this unit, that it actually makes the rear of the Marazzo feel a wee-bit narrow. The construct of the tail gate also contributes to this world view – since it dances around the large lamp unit, it feels narrow, and makes the boot entry seem narrow. Otherwise, the rear end of the Marazzo is sans any drama. The thick chrome strip connecting the two tail-lamps, and running the width of the rear, is a little too large in my view. The rear windshield, the black cladding at the bottom of the rear bumper (with in-



built reflectors) – the cladding runs all around, the large door handle at the bottom, etc look good. Mahindra has kept the rear end thankfully clear of any clutter. Overall, a huge thumbs up.

Interiors – plush, roomy, comfortable

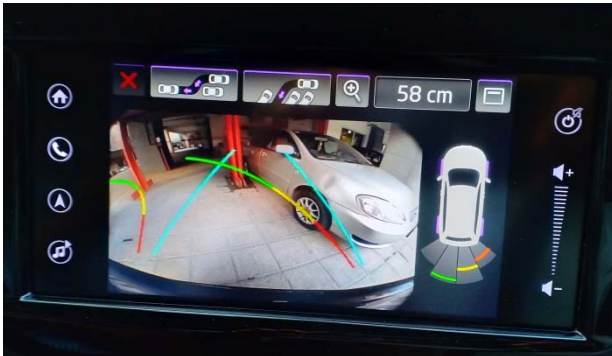
Open the wide and heavy doors and you are staring into a wide expanse of cabin, which is bright and airy thanks to the two-tone interior, the beige upholstery, and the large windows. The beige seats and roof together help in offering a very spacious feel, although they will require maintenance since they will be dust/stain magnets. The dashboard design is clean and clutter-free, and looks premium. The upmarket feel inside the cabin is given by the medley of materials used, and the touch and feel that they provide. The dashboard is finished in matte grey with patterns that look different when viewed from different angles. The left side of the dash (just above the medium-sized cooled glovebox) gets some random textures that appealed to me, while the middle is finished off in glossy black. Ceramic white strips (not unlike the ones found on the exterior of the Tata Nexon) are there in a few places to separate the black from the beige plastic panels beneath. While these ceramic white strips look slightly out of place, they are not jarring. For a vehicle of this size, I would have preferred a larger glovebox and maybe two boxes, like in the XUV. The pedals are well spaced, with a lot of space for a dead pedal. But at the foot of the steering column, where it passes through the floor and is locked down by four bolts, there was a square patch of carpet missing – strange!

You can literally walk into the Marazzo, both at the front and the rear – ingress and egress is very smooth, and comfortable for all including kids and the elderly. The perforated beige leather seats add to the premium feel. The front seats with movable handrests are extremely well bolstered and comfortable, with the driver’s seat coming with a lot of fore and aft movement (all manual). Even at the lowest seating position, the view offered is extremely good, the driving position is extremely comfortable, and very tall drivers will also not complain of being behind the wheel. Unfortunately, Mahindra hasn’t provided the steering with ‘reach’ or telescopic adjustments – only ‘rake’ or tilt adjustment is allowed, which is two-stage and manual. While the large glass area provides an extremely good view outside, the quarter glass at the A-pillar and the positioning of the wing mirrors means that there is a blind spot when turning the Marazzo. The door panel tops meld into the dashboard from the sides, and hence the panels are positioned higher than the window line.

The shark inspiration continues inside too – the door locks and handles are shaped like a shark fin. But sadly, there is no independent button to lock/unlock the doors! Similarly, while the wing mirrors open/close on the engine coming to life and the MPV being locked, there is no separate button to turn-in the mirrors in a tight traffic situation. It took me some time to realise that, strangely, Mahindra engineers have integrated all of the electric functions for the wing mirror into one button. While it may be nice from a cost saving purpose (I frankly don’t know how much it will save), the button by itself had a mind of its own – so once my ‘Eureka’ moment was done, then it was about trying to figure out how to stop the mirrors from opening and shutting on their own. A simple engine shut down and restart did solve the issue. What would it cost for a couple of buttons to be added?



The dash-mounted gear stick feels nice to the touch, as does the comfortably sized steering. The dash mounted gear stick frees up some space at the base. For a vehicle of this size, I would have preferred a thicker steering, maybe like the one on the XUV – this one is too skinny for my liking. The 3-spoke steering feels nice to hold though, and has plenty of buttons for attending to various functions. The centre console with the 7.3-inch touchscreen on top looks pretty good with the HVAC controls just below. The infotainment system features navigation, Mahindra BlueSense, Android Auto connectivity (unfortunately no Apple CarPlay – should be featured at a later date, says Mahindra), and vital information regarding the car. The HVAC buttons have been borrowed from the XUV's parts bin to save on costs, while the steering controls are from the Ssangyong Tivoli. The switchgears feel nice to hold and feel well built.



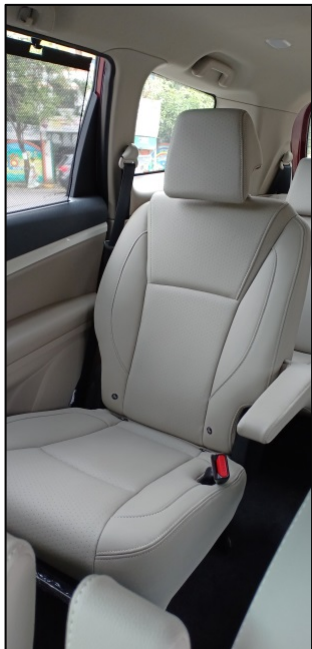
The SatNav system on the Marazzo is quicker in terms of starting up, more intuitive, and way better (on display as well as other functions) than what is available on my 2012 XUV. It has a lot more features and can help the driver navigate better. There are voice activated controls for the music system and voice assist features like voice recognition for infotainment and SMS read out. But there were times when it felt that at higher decibels, the voice from the speakers was raspy. The dual-pod instrument console with the 4.2-inch MID unit in the middle behind the steering looks good. There is a black-purple ring around the pods, which lends a classy touch to the eyes. The MID also integrates a stopwatch and a reminder for meetings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc!



The depth of the dashboard is a lot more than desired. What Mahindra has saved on the outside with a smaller snout has been given away somewhat by the deep dash, in my view. The Marazzo's design may have been inspired by a Shark but that handbrake lever looks like it has been pulled straight out of an aircraft's controls – it is an attention grabber for sure, but it took some time for me to get accustomed to bringing it down to normal position. While it is smooth (unlike the rough one on the XUV at launch), I found it a little bothersome initially to get the lever down fully. Overall the fit and finish levels on the Marazzo are extremely wonderful – they are a far cry from the Mahindra vehicles of yore. The shut lines – both inside and outside – are uniform and proper, and there is not much cause for complaint here.



The roof-mounted AC vents too look like they have been taken from an aircraft. This unique system offers a more centralised air flow, and can be adjusted according to preferences. There are two USB ports and a 12V socket for the driver and front passenger, while rear seat occupants get a common USB port, for charging only. There is a nice place to keep the phone while charging below these ports. But with the hand brake down while driving, accessing this area is a challenge. Similarly, the deep cavity right on top of the dashboard is not only a little too high, but it also makes you reach out to pick something from inside; and if it is a small object, you need to really strain. There is a very nice compartment between the front seats with a smooth cover – this can be used to store things or to place small bottles/cups, while you can place things on the cover's surface without them sliding away when the vehicle is in motion. The front seats get armrests, but the driver's armrest is like

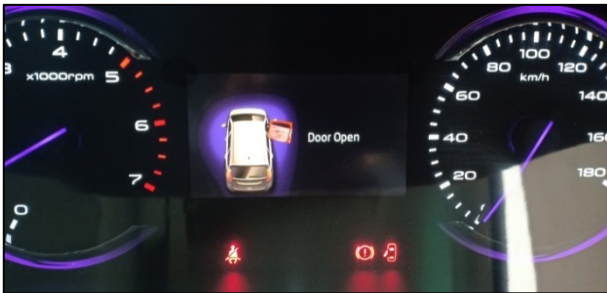


what was found on the Quanto and the NuvoSport – pretty irritating with their angle and to that extent not that practical. At the same time, the driver's armrest also comes in the way of accessing the storage area, and also can be irritatingly close while slotting the gear into the second cog.

The Marazzo comes with a 7-seater (my test mule had a 2+2+3 seating layout) or 8-seater cabin layout. In the second row, not only is access easy, but the seating is pretty comfortable too, with movable handrests for both seats, and adequate bolstering and lumbar support like in the front seats. I haven't experienced the second row bench seat (as in an 8-seater), but the Captain seats on the 7-seater M8 variant were excellent. With a flat floor, there should be no problem for the middle passenger to be seated comfortably over long drives. With the driver's seat fully pushed back (for a 6-foot-plus driver), the second row offered good leg and kneeroom, thanks to the Marazzo's 2760 mm wheelbase. You also have the option of sliding the second row seats back and forth, thereby helping improve leg and kneeroom; not only in the second row, but also for third row passengers. The middle row seats come with IsoFix (standard across variants) for installing child seats. Another cool thing is in-built sun shades for the second row windows – this is a segment first. But an ergonomic issue in the second row is the fact that once you keep your water bottle into their space provided on the doors, it is tough to access them unless the door is opened – strange!

The fish eye mirror and the glares' box in from the XUV parts bin, as are the sun visors – the vanity mirror is missing on the driver side. Why do manufacturers feel that lady drivers won't feel the need to touch up once they park? The map/cabin light for the front and second row are the standard ones with a flick switch, while those in the third row are from the XUV parts bin, and feel/look very different. While the large wing mirrors are helpful while reversing, the IRVM isn't of much use due to the thick D-pillar and the headrests of the rear seats. That is where the four sensors at the rear and the camera come into play. The large screen is crystal clear, and the moving gridlines are a great help to manoeuvre the car – it also comes with a couple of help tips to park the vehicle. And also helping with the manoeuvrability is the smart turning radius of 5.25 metres for this large vehicle, and you know that you can attempt to park the Marazzo into very tight spots. But what is not appreciated at all is the lack of more airbags in the Marazzo. Even the top-end M8 variant comes with just two airbags (standard across the four variants) – while the Marazzo is positioned against the Ertiga (two airbags as standard), I strongly feel that Mahindra should have taken a leaf out of Innova's books (a driver knee airbag; even the Yaris has one!) and from their very own XUV (six airbags).

Accessing the third row is done in a couple of ways. One can go between the two Captain seats to the third row. While one of the middle row seats tumbles forward at the flick of a lever, the other only falls down – no tumble function or even a lever to do that. The movement of this lever is also way better than what was on the XUV at launch. But these movements ensure that once can go to the third row with ease – age no bar. In the third row, two medium-sized adults and a kid (or three kids) can sit comfortably – this is way better than what the current Ertiga offers. The seating angle is decent (although the back could have been reclined), cushioning is adequate, and legroom for that



set of passengers was comfortable (a 150+ km ride over varied terrain), even if under-thigh support could have been more. But that is very much understandable. Third row passengers get bottle/cup holders, but unfortunately no USB port – I think that is a miss. Passengers in the third row don't get much of a view given that there are headrests for the seats upfront blocking their view, and on the sides the windows become small due to the climbing shoulder line.

The AC is the highlight of the cabin, with its 'diffused' and 'direct' air flow, and also four fan speeds. Not only does the roof mounted unit look cool, it also works cool – Mahindra calls it "Surround Cool" technology. And no, your head doesn't bang into the vents. At the back, there is a decent 190 litres of boot space with the third row up – good for a few weekend bags. With the seats down on the third row (60:40 split), a lot of space (1055 litres) does open up, but sadly the floor doesn't flatten out as is the case with the XUV. So luggage placement will take up time – the consequent higher boot loading lip is also a slight pain. Also, with the second row folded down (60:40 here too in the case of a bench seat), while additional space can be created, the fact that the seats either don't fold down flat or tumble ahead means that the optimum space utilisation doesn't happen. The full size spare tyre, jack, and other equipment are safely hidden or stored away. All in all, another big thumbs up.

Under the hood – a silent and efficient performer

The Marazzo has been designed with a global audience in mind. While export markets are expected to feature all-wheel-drive variants, the Marazzo will be sold solely as front-wheel-drive in India. The Marazzo is claimed to be the world's first front-wheel-drive vehicle with a ladder-frame chassis to have a transversely mounted engine, and this has been patented by Mahindra. This basically means that the crankshaft of the Marazzo's engine lies perpendicular, i.e. at a 90° angle to the direction of travel. The Marazzo is powered by an all-new 1.5-litre D15 diesel engine, which has been developed in-house by Mahindra with the help of AVL Austria, and complies with BS-IV emission norms; with a few changes, this can be made BS-VI compliant.

The new engine is a four-cylinder turbocharged unit from the mFalcon family powering the KUV, unlike the turbo three-cylinder 1.5-litre mHawk found under the hood of the TUV. So not only is the noise obliterated, there is more power on offer too. This new 1497cc unit makes 121 bhp of peak power @ 3500 rpm and generates 300 Nm of peak torque @ 1750-2500 rpm. It also comes with an EcoSense mode (from a switch on the dash), which lowers the power delivery to 100 bhp for better fuel efficiency. Mahindra claims a fuel efficiency of 17.3kpl for the Marazzo, which is impressive (it has a small fuel tank of 45 litres). I didn't get a chance to test out the drinking habits of the Marazzo in city traffic conditions (roads around the office at Lower Parel – and Mumbai overall nowadays – are injurious to such attempts). But on the highway, with a light right foot, the Marazzo was like a connoisseur, sipping on its drink ever so slowly.

Power is sent to the front wheels via a new 6-speed manual gearbox. There is a Magnetti Marelli AMT and an auto gearbox in the offing, as is a petrol mill – timelines are in 2019 and 2020 respectively for these as of now. Mahindra claims that the new Marazzo is the quietest vehicle in its class.



According to them, with the Marazzo's engine kept at idle, the intensity of the sound recorded inside the cabin of the new MPV was just 45 decibels. Mahindra has worked hard on the refinement of the way its new engine runs and on increasing sound deadening. Now is it like that? Have they managed to transfer what is on paper into reality? I would say that Mahindra has managed to deliver that with a resounding "Yes". It is extremely quiet at idle, gets a little vocal when you start building up speed, and only gets noisy when the engine is being pushed to its limits – when you are moving up a steep hill on poor roads with a full load of people and are trying to get down all that power to get this 1.6-tonne beast to gain traction and get going. But even then, the noise level is controlled.

There is no push button start in the Marazzo – not even on the top M8 variant. While this isn't a deal breaker, I strongly feel that Mahindra should have introduced them (at least on M8) as many lower priced cars now come equipped with these features. While peak torque comes in the higher band, enough torque is generated at lower revs to ensure that the Marazzo gets off the line smoothly, silently, and briskly, even with a full load – and we had a full load of six adults and two kids in the early morning drive to Lonavla (and beyond) and back. Acceleration is brisk and very linear (but it isn't Usain Bolt – more like Sebastian Coe), and the engine feels very smooth throughout, barring a few rough notes hit at higher revs.

While there is hardly a shudder from the Marazzo when the throttle is given and the clutch released suddenly, there were a few times when the MPV begs to be revved harder and is searching for that engine spin to get its power. Those were the times when (taken by surprise) the engine shut down. In the middle of impatient and abusive traffic in the city, this can be tricky. And if it happens in the middle of heavy traffic when you are climbing a ghat section, you have to get to work quickly. But again, while this isn't a deal breaker, and I see it more as an aberration, it is in Mahindra's interests to ensure that this is corrected at the earliest.

Ride quality and manners – superb

The engine is peppy and vibration-free due to the materials used; NVH levels are superb due to the sound deadening material used all around. The other nice part is the light clutch and the smoothness with which the gears slot into their cogs – there isn't that jerkiness or rubbery feeling associated with Mahindra vehicles of yore. The gear lever sits high up, and is a bit too long in my view. The result is a correspondingly wide shift throw, unlike the short and precise throws of the XUV. The light clutch and the huge amount of space for the dead pedal meant that this was a very relaxing drive. There is a bit of turbo lag at lower revs if the speed isn't adjusted, but again it is hardly noticeable. It will show up if you try to push this car into a hurried getaway, and that is where the poor power-to-weight ratio of the Marazzo comes to the fore. This has ramifications for overtaking manoeuvres on highways (especially on those dreaded two-lane ones) – bide your time, downshift, and then undertake that overtake. Drive safe!



The Marazzo is extremely nimble and the light steering ensures that the vehicle does your bidding every time. If you want to change lanes suddenly, and it will happen many times on Indian highways (with slow moving vehicles in the fast lane that refuse to move), the Marazzo will change course at the blink of an eye – not for it the lumbering movement of a large vehicle. The Marazzo may not be very exciting to drive, but its lower stance and well-judged controls give it better dynamics than the Innova. But the light steering also means that there is always some trepidation at the back of your mind when you hit higher triple digit speeds – the steering doesn't weigh up adequately, and with that skinny avatar, you are always on your guard. The Marazzo M8 variant comes equipped with cruise control, and that is indeed a boon on long distance travel.

While the Innova may be a great performer in urban stop-go traffic, the Marazzo is not bad either. Yes, it has a problem of torque availability at lower revs, which is a bane in the urban jungle. But out in the open with highway cruising, the Marazzo feels better with a more refined engine. The smaller engine has enough pulling power and a lower weight ensures that the Marazzo performs better there. A tall fifth gear, a second overdrive option, and a refined engine all help. The smaller engine and lower torque at lower revs hits you when you are climbing steep roads with a full load – at that point in time, you need to constantly keep shifting gears (and you thank the precise slotting of gears) to keep the engine on the boil; the Innova pulls cleanly and there is no need to constantly change gears to maintain momentum. The Marazzo has this tendency to stall if it is not given enough revs, which isn't the most ideal when driving in traffic. I faced it a couple times in city traffic and also out on the highway on an uphill climb. This essentially comes down to a certain style of driving, and one needs to be prepared to adapt – I am not saying that this is a constant, but just that this is a feature that figures somewhere.

While I have loved the way the XUV rides and performs, the Marazzo's ride quality came as a very pleasant surprise. It is way better than the XUV when it was launched (like the interiors), and that is pleasing. The only complaint is on the inadequate weighing up of the steering – otherwise, most things were just perfect. The MPV is extremely stable on straight lines at high speeds, holds its own at high speeds on sweeping corners, and while it is no corner carver, it approaches bends with aplomb and minimal body roll. In fact, body roll is so contained that you hardly feel it – it gives you the confidence to take those sweeping corners even with a full load of people at a good speed and without any thought of lifting off. Now, in the real world there will very few times when a people mover will be driven in this manner, and so the impeccable road manners of the Marazzo are welcome. In any case, as soon as the 100 kmph mark is breached, a double beep echoes in the cabin, and an image comes in the MID between the dials warning that you are overspeeding!

Ride comfort was one of the big talking points for all of us during our entire journey. With a full load of passengers, the Marazzo hardly put a hair wrong and tackled all the bad roads that were thrown at it with aplomb. Passengers travelling in the third row didn't complain of being bounced around (something that Innova passengers in the third row, and sometimes even on the second row have



complained about) and even when the Marazzo was being thrown about at good speeds on bad roads, no one asked for that dreaded paper bag, despite having had breakfast along the way. The Marazzo uses a double wishbone suspension at the front and a twist beam suspension at the rear. With a ground clearance of 200mm with a full load inside, the Marazzo takes on real bad roads and speedbreakers that are thrown at us constantly by a confluence of nature and BMC/PWD with great aplomb; lateral movement of passengers is contained. How I wish that manufacturers start thinking about giving a proper 3-point seatbelt for the middle passenger too!

With disc brakes as standard on all four wheels on all variants, the Marazzo brakes pretty surely, although I had issues with panic braking. The brakes feel a little spongy at that time, and one wants some more bite, and definitely less travel. Yet again, this isn't a deal breaker in the real world where this MPV will be driven. With excellent suspension, brilliant ride quality, and nimble handling, the Marazzo has thrown the gauntlet at the Innova, even if Mahindra has pitched it against the Ertiga. And you would notice that a lot of the comparison of the Marazzo before this was against the Innova and not against the Ertiga – I feel that Mahindra has played it very smart with its positioning. While the Marazzo has a lot going for it to challenge the Innova, Mahindra has targeted the smaller Ertiga as of now. A bigger proportioned Ertiga with a bigger engine (1.5-litre diesel and petrol), more features, and better looks is going to be launched soon, but I feel that the Marazzo holds the edge.

A winner from Mahindra?

The Marazzo comes across as a thoroughbred – brilliantly engineered and put into a fantastic package, and priced just right. Mahindra has produced a winner from its stables here – they have set new standards for refinement, comfort, and driving ease. Although I would have preferred a few other things (more airbags, push button start, etc – at least on the top variant; a couple of these as an option to the discerning buyer), I sense that Mahindra has thrown the gauntlet down at its rivals. It is not just the Ertiga, but also the Innova that should be on their guard. Mahindra may face cannibalisation of its own models due to this MPV. Going up against the Ertiga and the Innova, and coming out trumps is a dream come true for Mahindra with the Marazzo.

There is an automatic/AMT in the pipeline, and a petrol version (in collaboration with Ssangyong) – I guess Mahindra isn't opening its cards; they are waiting for competition to make their moves and also assessing demand for the Marazzo. The all-wheel drive option will be available for export markets, and as of now Mahindra has no plans to introduce it to India – I sense it will all depend on demand. While the taxi segment operators would definitely be keen Marazzo owners, I sense that this is a premium enough product from Mahindra that will carry the white number plates in good numbers. The Marazzo does most things better than the Innova despite having a smaller engine and size. And while it may lack some of the features, the price balances the drawbacks. Unless you favour a 'badge' for a better drive, the Marazzo should get your vote. At least go for a test drive...

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IIFL Securities Limited (Formerly 'India Infoline Limited'), CIN No.: U99999MH1996PLC132983, Corporate Office – IIFL Centre, Kamala City, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400013 Tel: (91-22) 4249 9000 .Fax: (91-22) 40609049, Regd. Office – IIFL House, Sun Infotech Park, Road No. 16V, Plot No. B-23, MIDC, Thane Industrial Area, Wagle Estate, Thane – 400604 Tel: (91-22) 25806650. Fax: (91-22) 25806654 E-mail: mail@indiainfoline.com Website: www.indiainfoline.com, Refer www.indiainfoline.com for detail of Associates.
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