

MOTORING



CHUCKING, ZIPPING AND NIPPING

Guilherme Marques

TEST DRIVE || The Inster is a cool new offering from Hyundai. It is also exactly what a small electric car should be.

THE Hyundai Motor Company – that is the Hyundai and Kia brands – are South Korea’s third largest business conglomerate and were the world’s third largest car maker by sales in 2024, behind only the Volkswagen Group and Toyota. Number of cars sold last year? 7,231,248.

I have been writing about cars for 16 years. When I started, back in 2009, Hyundais were value goods. Cars so far removed from the idea of an emotional purchase, of someone aspiring to have one, I cannot remember ever having a conversation with a friend or a colleague about any model that interested me at the time.

That has all changed – and how! Hyundai are the current World Rally Champions for drivers. They created the amazing i30N, the i20N and, looking at the industry as a whole in 2025, it is clear to me Hyundai – and Kia – are two of the three brands most fit to fight the Chinese at their own game. BMW is the other, and the only European name in that restricted club.

Put simply, Hyundai and Kia make great battery electric vehicles. They were the first to realise the shift in the market and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become a premium constructor. They took it with both hands.

In building cars like the Ioniq 5 and Ioniq 6, this company achieved something incredible: they are going

head-to-head with the Germans in the premium EV segment – and mostly beating them – and showing the public they need not buy a Chinese news-of-the-week electric car just because it’s cheap.

Interestingly, and because of the perception the public now has of their upper-segment cars, the small Hyundai EV I just drove also has a kind of aura about it. It just doesn’t feel like another run-of-the-mill small electric car as it would have felt a decade ago. This is real progress. People actually want to buy Hyundais! Big wow.

The Inster is Hyundai’s smallest electric car and there is a certain charm about it. The design is different, all its own, a bit but not too cartoonish. There is not another car like it on the road – for all the right reasons – and that is always a good thing.

It was just recently awarded World Electric Car of the Year 2025 by a pool of 96 automotive journalists from 30 countries and sales are going pretty well too. First reason is, obviously, the way it looks. Cool. Charming. Different. With some retro touches but extremely modern.

The pixel-stylized rear lighting and indicators look fabulous, whereas the proportions are bang on. As a designer, I like that there is an underlying search for what can be the archetypal city runabout.

The cheeky interior confirms Hyundai’s intention



to do things differently. The cabin is, well, fun. Built with a raft of recycled and recyclable materials, it makes the whole electric car approach sound less hypocritical. The seat coverings, for example, are made of 100% recycled PET.

The infotainment system comprises two 10.25-inch screens with a configurable layout. I could not have found it easier to connect my phone and start using it, while the rest of the system feels pretty much standard for this day and age, in the sense it has everything you expect. Even a little too many pings and pongs reminding you of the speed limit and that you should brake now because there is a car in front. Thank you, but I did get my driver’s license a few years ago, you know...

Not everything is controlled on the screen, though (mercifully). Navigation, media and setup shortcuts can be accessed via actual

buttons. Good decision. Also very relevant is the fact the Inster has loads of space inside. It’s huge for such a small car, much bigger than the pictures let show, believe me.

On the road, the Inster keeps throwing up good vibes. It rides really well, and deals with bumps, cracks and holes with ease. Being light for an electric car, fairly small in size at 3.8m long and with 115 horsepower, it’s

fun to chuck about around the urban perimeter. In fact, this car makes me want to write more expressions like that one, ‘chuck about’. Zip around in – yes, the Inster is definitely good for that. Nip briskly through town in – also nicely suited for that. You get the gist: it’s a fun little city car.

It will go 250km on a charge in almost any kind of use and Hyundai say it can go up to 360km if you drive

it carefully – meaning slowly, but it is what it is. Around town, the WLTP official range is a whopping 493km! Prices start at €25,000.

The Inster feels like an extrovert child who is very mature for its age. A product built by a company who knows what it is doing, where the electric expertise shines through – as does the certainty of what this kind of car should be. A definite winner in my book.



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