

Nano makes it to Time's most important cars of all time

AS THE DEBATE GOES ON...



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One week after its unveiling, the world's media is still agog with news and views about the Tata Nano. Many termed it a cute, ultra-cheap car that will revolutionise personal transportation in India and Asia and many others are calling it a glorified go-kart that will be unreliable and unsafe.

The debate is still raging in all sorts of media - print, TV and the Internet.

Online polls that ask Americans if they will buy one if and when the Nano is launched in that market, blogs that have postings, which swing from patriotic praise to outright hatred and discussion forums that are still witness to heated arguments about the promise and fallout of the car are keeping the Tata car in the thick of it all. The Nano has probably got more media attention than it bargained for. But, it was only to be expected with the Nano's much-publicised price tag making it the cheapest car of the world.

Competitors who have in the past sworn that it is an impossibility to develop a \$2,500 car have reacted to the Nano as far away as Detroit – the home of the American automobile industry.

At the North American International Auto Show, which is currently on at Detroit, the hot car being discussed was the Nano, where it is not even on display.

Interestingly, the notoriously taciturn, Toyota Motor Corporation and its President, Mr Katsuaki Watanabe, also reacted to the Nano saying that the world's number two car maker will need a little more time to develop vehicles at this kind of price point. It is reported that he also added that an early prototype of a Toyota small car that will be made specifically for markets such as India is close to getting a "go sign".

In the midst of all this attention that the Nano is still getting, comes one of the first recognitions of its potential to create history.

In a presentation titled 'The dozen most important cars of all time starting from 1908 to the present', *Time* magazine lists the Tata Nano along with legendary cars like the Ford Model T, the Volkswagen Beetle, Chevy Belair, Toyota Corolla, the Mini and the Honda Civic.

Listing the 12 cars in chronological order, the *Time* magazine presentation says only these 'few automobiles have been able to fundamentally change the way we live and dream'. As for the Nano, *Time* says "India's 'people's car', as it is already dubbed, is intended to put motoring within reach of Asia's masses.

At \$2,500 it's hard to see it how it won't sell, but even if it doesn't it will become the poster car for a new, stripped-back style of engineering — glue instead of welds! — that could change the world."