

AUTOCAR

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MAHINDRA REBORN

How the brand is reinventing itself with new leadership, new products and a sharper focus

**NEW
MAHINDRA
SCORPIO**

**AUTOCAR
IMAGES**

**MAHINDRA
XUV900
COUPE**

**NEW
MAHINDRA
XUV700**
**SALES
ANALYSIS**
BOUNCING
BACK FROM A
TOUGH YEAR

RECORD RUN

3 tracks, 3 lap records in an RS Q8
...and a 3,500km road trip in between

GREEN 2 GREEN DRIVE

 Nexon EV on a silent
safari in Satpura

PLUS HYUNDAI ALCAZAR PROTOTYPE » NEW BMW 6 SERIES GT » NEW PORSCHE 911 GT3 » KAWASAKI ZX-10R

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COMMENT



MAHINDRA 3.0



WHEN THE SCORPIO was launched in 2002, we called it the biggest step forward for Mahindra in 50 years, and it certainly was, leapfrogging the brand into a new era of products. Since then, the company has gone from being a rural player to more of a mainstream one, with products that are easier to drive, comfier, have the latest tech, and perhaps most importantly, are desirable. The success of the Scorpio gave M&M the confidence to embark on a spate of acquisitions and alliances, and venture into new territories like two-wheelers and HCVs. But did the company spread itself too thin? Were these new acquisitions a distraction from its core business? That's the current company view after the old guard handed the baton over to new leadership that is taking a radically different approach. Non-core businesses are being shed to concentrate purely on what made Mahindra great in the first place, its DNA - SUVs. More than that, there's a new-found agility and rapid decision-making sweeping through the company, and the focus is on bringing in the right talent, globally, to effect this approach.

The era of alliances is over. SsangYong, which was bleeding cash, has been dumped, the partnership with Ford recently came to an abrupt end, and Mahindra is confident of going it alone. It won't be easy, of course, but the company is confident that being independent will make it faster and more agile.

Not helping is the fact that the entire market is now clawing at Mahindra's prized turf - SUVs - with even newcomers like Kia overtaking it on sales in these segments. Unlike Maruti, which has little competition in the budget end of the market, as most players have vacated it, Mahindra has to contend with an onslaught from rivals that have all dived into the SUV space.

And that's why this 'New Mahindra' has arrived at just the right time. In this issue, we bring you the inside scoop on a bunch of new-generation Mahindra SUVs that will hit back at advancing competition (page 14).

HORMAZD SORABJEE Editor

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The Future of Mahindra

- 12 new models in the next five years
- SUV-only model range
- Marazzo, KUV100 to be phased out
- Focus on EVs

Sometimes, all it takes is one big hit to tell the world you're still in the game, and more importantly, that you have the power to win it. That moment of rejuvenation for Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) came with the all-new Thar. It was a massive hit from the get-go - it won the 2021 Autocar Car of the Year Award and, with more than 50,000 bookings and counting, the Thar marks a return to form for Mahindra, which until now was sputtering along with a product portfolio that wasn't quite firing on all cylinders.

The success of the Thar reinforces a new direction the company has embarked on. "It's all about focusing on our DNA, which is authentic

SUVs," says Rajesh Jejurikar, executive director, Auto and Farm Sectors. And this is exactly what the company plans to do going forward. In fact, under the new management of Dr Anish Shah, the new MD and CEO of the Mahindra Group, and Jejurikar, the promise is to focus on nothing other than SUVs that deliver a strong emotional connect.

While the old guard led by Dr Pawan Goenka was striving to expand Mahindra's horizons by entering the MPV, micro-SUV, and other niche segments, the focus now is clearly back on full-blown SUVs. The thinking is that there's no point in wasting precious resources chasing difficult-to-crack segments

when investment can be more effectively deployed on bread-and-butter product lines and future technologies. EVs will play a big role in the company's future product strategy and around 25 percent of the total capital expenditure for product development and expansion will be earmarked for EVs.

INVESTING SMARTLY

Mahindra's capital allocation for SUVs and tractors together is Rs 9,000 crore for the next three years, with an additional Rs 3,000 crore investment for EVs. That's substantially less than the previous three-year period investment of Rs 15,000 crore, but investments have

already been made in key capital-intensive areas like powertrains and an all-new electronic (E/E) architecture.

Armed with new, state-of-the-art mStallion petrol and mHawk diesel families, which are package-protected to meet future norms, Mahindra doesn't have to invest in engine technology for the next five years. And with engine capacities ranging from 1.2 to 2.2 litres, Mahindra has all its future IC-engine-powered products covered.

No investment will be needed for infotainment and electronic systems either. Mahindra has already developed its next-generation 'Smart Core' system, which will make its debut in the XUV700 and will be a quantum

leap ahead of what is presently available. This all-new E/E system, developed by Visteon, will allow future Mahindras to have the latest infotainment systems, 360-degree cameras, a suite of connected features and even Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), which might become mandatory with the next stage of safety regulations.

Still, money is tight, which is why Mahindra is only spending it where it thinks it can win. This means pulling the plug on non-performing product lines, like the Marazzo and KUV100. The Marazzo, though a very good product, fell prey, like many other good MPVs, to the pincer attack by the Ertiga and Innova, which, sitting at opposite ends, have

NEXT-GEN SCORPIO



XUV900



cornered the MPV market. As far as the KUV100 goes, it's in a segment that's way out of Mahindra's comfort zone.

Mahindra also no longer has the luxury of sharing development costs and the benefits of scale with Ford, after the planned JV fell through. This means Mahindra won't have access to Ford's B772 platform, which was to be the base for the next-gen XUV500 (S301). With a length of around 4.3 to 4.4 metres, the S301 will be smaller than the outgoing XUV500 and positioned as a Creta fighter, but Mahindra would have to source another platform to underpin this ground-up new model, and that takes time and money. However, the company doesn't seem

fazed by this setback and feels that, since investments in the engine and E/E architecture are already done, developing the S301 grounds-up "won't cost more than Rs 1,200 crore," according to a source.

But there are other challenges too. The change in leadership couldn't have come at a more difficult time for Mahindra. The last year has been a particularly difficult one for the company, fundamentally because of

supply chain and production issues. Mahindra didn't manage the transition to BS6 as smoothly as most other automakers and was more impacted by the semiconductor shortage issue. As a result of all these challenges, its sales and market share fell drastically, and the company had to sit back and watch traditional rivals like Tata Motors surge ahead.

However, the new

leadership is nothing less than fired up, and is wasting no time to claw back lost ground. A company insider says, "There's a new energy sweeping through the company, the likes of which we've not seen for decades." Jejurikar's first task at hand is to build a strong team, and this means further empowering a handful of trusted, existing senior executives and bringing in fresh people too. Jejurikar is on the hunt for the best global talent to fill in key positions. A company source quips, "The HR department is the busiest in the company these days." Already on board is Dr Uli Stuhec, formerly of Ford and an industry veteran, brought in to kick-start Mahindra's Born Electric programme.

“
Building strong design and styling capability is a top priority.
”

Design and styling has been a fundamental weakness at Mahindra, and company sources say that Jejurikar's top priority is to enhance and build the company's design capability to another level, to give the Mahindra brand a distinct identity. In fact, in an internal note to company employees, Jejurikar said the "company will invest in design to be future ready." Again, the company is aggressively scouting for the best talent and there's even talk of a Mahindra Design Studio being set up in Europe to tap into an ecosystem of global design talent.

The future looks very bright for Mahindra, just looking at the pipeline of new products planned over the next five years, and as Jejurikar says, "The Thar is only the beginning."

XUV700 (W601)

Kicking off the long list of SUVs will be the high-on-space and high-on-tech, three-row XUV700. Also on the cards is a lower-priced, 5-seat variant. Pitted against the MG Hector Plus and Tata Safari, the XUV700 promises to obliterate its rivals spec for spec. Top variants will have best-in-class features, and the standout item is the very Merc-like fully digital, twin-panel infotainment and instrumentation display.

The XUV700 will be powered by the same 2.0-litre mStallion turbo-petrol as the Thar, but the big surprise is that power has been bumped up to a whopping 200hp, which will make it the most powerful SUV in its class. The 2.2 diesel has been bumped up to 185hp, and both will come with 6-speed manual and automatic gearboxes.

Built on a brand-new, lightweight monocoque, it's believed to be around 150kg lighter than the outgoing XUV500. With an extremely favourable power-to-weight ratio, the company is even targeting a sub-10sec 0-100kph sprint time for the petrol version. The XUV700 is also believed to be coming with ADAS driver aids, which will include Level 2 autonomous driving. →

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



TUV300 gets Bolero Neo name and styling updates.



Spy shots reveal next-gen Scorpio's squatter proportions.



XUV700 has a more restrained and cleaner design language.

NEW SCORPIO (Z101)

Spy pictures of the all-new Scorpio suggest that there will be no mistaking one of the most iconic SUVs in the market for anything else. The stance and proportions are familiar, as is the window line, and that bulge near the

rear door looks even more pronounced now. The side-hinged door with the spare tyre under the floor are likely to continue.

The next-gen model has a wider and lower stance, the track has been increased and the overall height reduced, which not only gives it a more

Four-door Thar to expand customer base and bring in family-oriented adventure seekers.

planted look but improves the dynamics, which is a weakness with the current version. What also stands out is a more attractive and cleaner nose, with Mahindra's new three-dimensional grille sitting between a pair of LED-equipped lamps.

The all-new Scorpio is also expected to be larger, more comfortable and nicer to drive. Based on Mahindra's 'Gen 3' body-on-frame chassis, it may have a slightly longer wheelbase for better cabin space and high-speed stability too. Engine options are again a 2.0-litre petrol and a 2.2-litre diesel, but the power and torque figures aren't clear. The Scorpio will be priced between the Thar and the XUV700, so keeping the model hierarchy in mind, we expect the petrol and diesel variants to develop 180hp and 160hp, respectively.

BOLERO NEO

Basically a reworked TUV300, the Bolero Neo will get a new nose, a mildly reconfigured interior and a different seat configuration. Placed slightly above the regular Bolero, the Neo will cater to those looking for a slightly higher level of comfort and performance.

While the TUV didn't garner much attention, Mahindra is hoping the Bolero badge will spin its magic.

BOLERO UPGRADE

This is likely to be the last upgrade for the Bolero in its current form. Changes are likely to include a bit more oomph from under the bonnet, a new touchscreen on the inside, and a new headlight and grille combo to help give it a slightly updated identity that could be a bit different from the current one.

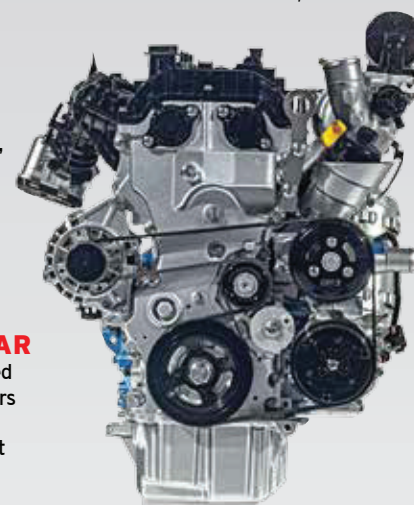
FOUR-DOOR THAR

Anand Mahindra is believed to have said that customers shouldn't walk away from a Thar just because it's got two doors. That comment was the greenlight for a four-door version for which development is underway. The four-door won't be aimed at individuals, but families who want to enjoy the great outdoors together. The fact that the bestselling Jeep Wrangler is also the four-door version hasn't been lost on Mahindra's product planning team. While the wheelbase will no doubt be stretched to add in an extra pair of doors, the track too might be widened to enhance stability.

XUV900 (W620)

You've seen a version of Mahindra's coupe-SUV before. Known as the Aero and showcased at the 2016 Auto Expo, this XUV500-based coupe made waves. The low-slung profile drew a lot of attention, but unfortunately there was no business case at the time, and so the Aero didn't take off. Now, however, with the Thar doing wonders and buyers on the lookout

for SUVs that are different, what we hear is that the Aero will see the light of day as the XUV900. Built on the same platform as the XUV700, it likely won't get the pillarless cabin that was showcased,



State-of-the-art engines for all its products is Mahindra's trump card.

but what you can expect is a funky new interior and an even more radical nose. And wouldn't the W620 be super as a full-electric?

NEXT-GEN XUV500 (S301)

Possibly the most critical model for Mahindra, as it fills a vital gap in the portfolio and also because the company has to go back to the drawing board to develop it. The S301 was to be based on Ford's B772 platform as part of its JV plan, but after an abrupt end to all association with Ford, Mahindra has been left without a platform for its Creta fighter. Mahindra is likely to use the XUV300 platform as an alternative, but it will have to re-engineer what is essentially a

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Model	Launch*	Price*	Length (m)*	Powertrain output*
XUV700 (W601)	October 2021	Rs 17-22 lakh	4.6	200hp (2.0P), 185hp (2.2D)
Bolero Neo	End 2021	Rs 9-12 lakh	3.9	100hp (1.5D)
Bolero Upgrade	End 2021	Rs 8-9 lakh	3.9	76hp (1.5D)
New Scorpio (Z101)	Early 2022	Rs 12-16 lakh	4.5	180hp (2.0P), 160hp (2.2D)
eKUV	Early 2022	Rs 9-13 lakh	3.7	55hp
eXUV300	Mid 2022	Rs 13-18 lakh	3.9	204hp
Thar 4-Door	End 2022	Rs 14-16 lakh	4.8	150hp (2.0P), 130hp (2.2D)
New XUV500 (S301)	Early 2024	Rs 10-17 lakh	4.3	160hp (1.5P), 110hp (1.5D)
XUV900 (W620)	2024	Rs 19-24 lakh	4.7	200hp (2.0P), 185hp (2.2D)
All-new Bolero	Late 2024	Rs 9-12 lakh	3.9	110hp (1.5D)
Born Electric skateboard	2025	Rs 9.5-25 lakh	3.9-4.5	80-110hp

*ESTIMATED



Future Mahindras will get the latest infotainment system developed by Visteon using 'Smart Core' technology.

SsangYong Tivoli platform. One of the weaknesses of the Tivoli platform is that it's too heavy and expensive, so Mahindra will have to knock off weight and cost from the outset to make the S301 competitive. Engine options are likely to be the same that were slated for the B772 platform - a 160hp 1.5 turbo-petrol and a 110hp 1.5 diesel.

The S301's market name won't be the XUV400, as was widely believed, but will instead bring back XUV500. Though a size smaller than the current model, the company hopes using the XUV500 nomenclature for

position. It will get the same 1.5 diesel as the XUV300, but in a higher state of tune.

eKUV

The eKUV, with a low-voltage 72V architecture and a modest 55hp motor, is a bit of a stopgap and is aimed at those wanting a basic EV for short runs. Mahindra is in the process of upgrading the 15.9kWh battery to give it a longer range and make it more practical. More power would be nice too, but then you would need a larger battery.

eXUV300

Mahindra is smarting at the

“
There's a new energy sweeping through the company.
”

the S301 will position it in a higher segment.

ALL-NEW BOLERO

Mahindra will finally replace its aging warhorse, the Bolero, come late-2024. Slated to be built on the Gen 3 chassis that underpins the Scorpio and Thar, the new Bolero will be a big step forward in the areas of safety and performance. The next-generation Bolero will replace both, the Bolero Neo and the regular Bolero to consolidate its market

fact that it lost the first-mover advantage for a compact e-SUV to Tata Motors, which started later with the Nexon EV and still pipped the eXUV300 to the market. Mahindra says the reason for the delay is localisation of components to a high enough level to make it very cost competitive.

The first car off Mahindra's Electric Scalable and Modular Architecture (MESMA), the eXUV is likely to come with a 380V system and will also get

Time taken to localise eXUV300 lost Mahindra the first-mover advantage.



Q&A

RAJESH JEJURIKAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUTO & FARM SECTORS, MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA

You have taken over at a really challenging time not just for M&M but the auto industry as well. Are you daunted with the job ahead?

When I joined M&M in the auto business two decades back, it was a very difficult time for the company. Our stronghold was soft-top products, which was declining almost at 25 percent per year. We had to reposition the entire brand to a very different target audience along with all new products. So I am no stranger to challenges this company has faced and know that there are many things to do to face that challenge to transform the business. You will recall that in 2000 we had a good portfolio of products in the oven, the Bolero was ready to launch and the Scorpio was at an advance stage of development. So after getting into this role last year, I realised that what we have again is a very, very robust base to build on. The pipeline is very strong, the Thar is a hint of what the company's product strength is. When we start rolling out our new products this year, they will surprise the market, and that's what excites me.

But you still have production issues, more so than other automakers. What went wrong?

There are several reasons. One is we have a much higher diesel portfolio overall than gasoline, compared to others. The transition to BS6 in February 2020 for diesel needed some parts to come in from China, which



went into lockdown, so for two months we couldn't get anything to ramp up production. In Q3, we got hit by the semiconductor shortage issue more than others, because 90 percent of our supply comes from one vendor and they had a major quality problem in a few of their semiconductor suppliers. However, I am just waiting for these issues to be behind us and to get back to normalcy because demand overall is very buoyant and we are well poised to deliver a very strong performance. It's not just Thar, XUV 300, Bolero and Scorpio that have strong demand, we are confident the new models will be winners as well.

The company has stated that it wants to focus on making true-blue SUVs or pure SUVs. What is your definition of that?

Let's erase the word 'true blue' because that clearly has a connotation of being a body-on-frame product. We are clearly not saying that we are going to be only body-

on-frame products. First let's start by saying we want to be an SUV-specialised brand. When a customer looks at our product, they should feel it's an authentic SUV and not a wannabe SUV. We also want to leverage the true DNA of the brand and have the brand tell its own stories about where we come from and who we are. So as we go forward, we will play out to this narrative, which is about vehicles with an unmissable

presence. Another part of the narrative is vehicles with adventure capability. Now, adventure doesn't necessarily mean we will henceforth be only 4X4 or AWD, because we believe adventure is a mindset of exploring the impossible.

So, is the focus going to be on sharpening the Mahindra brand, making the brand attributes clear and making sure your products are unequivocally a Mahindra? Absolutely, and I would like to reinforce that not only is it happening at an emotional level, but also at a very rational level. So, the brand personification and the brand idea is in a way emotional, but to deliver that is a very well-defined process. For example, to say our SUVs have unmissable presence, what does it mean by way of, for example, the angle of the A-pillar? There are multiple parameters that have been defined to ensure we don't lose sight of sticking true to the brand attributes. **HORMAZD SORABJEE**

BORN ELECTRIC SKATEBOARD

Mahindra is betting big on this long-term project and the company is building a Born Electric skateboard platform that will be the base for a range of pure-electric Mahindra SUVs. Unlike the MESMA architecture, which is based on an existing IC

engine car platform, this all-new skateboard will not be compromised and will be optimally packaged.

The skateboard opens up a world of possibilities, and it's likely that Mahindra will have a range of EVs from 3.9 to 4.5 metres long. First, off the bat are likely to be commercial vehicles, followed by SUVs.