

Me And My Car

Quietness of electric drivetrain puts him at ease

Motoring in a fuel-efficient hybrid is the preferred way for mechanical engineering undergrad Muhammad Nazirul Syahmi

Wong Kai Yi

In his day-to-day life, Mr Muhammad Nazirul Syahmi, 25, is at the wheel of his dark silver Nissan Note e-Power, a series hybrid hatchback propelled by an electric motor.

The battery powering the motor is charged by a three-cylinder petrol engine under the bonnet.

Motoring in a fuel-efficient hybrid is the preferred way for the final-year mechanical engineering student at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) College of Design and Engineering.

"Even though most of us enjoy loud petrol-powered engines, like the V6 and V8, I prefer the quietness of an electric drivetrain when I'm commuting. It puts me at ease," he says.

The responsiveness of the Note e-Power's electric drivetrain at lower speeds is a big draw for Mr Nazirul, allowing him to zip around town with ease yet be parsimonious on fuel at the same time.

He traded in his Nissan Sylphy for the Note e-Power in July 2021 at his late mother's urging to buy a more fuel-efficient car.

At the time, he was deciding between the Nissan Kicks e-Power and Note e-Power. He desired a crossover for its space, but the cheaper Note e-Power with its latest second-generation e-Power system eventually won out.

The Note cost about \$90,000 after the trade-in.

Mr Nazirul wanted an electric Nissan partly because he was smitten with the seamless one-pedal driving experience in his father's Nissan Serena e-Power MPV – a driving mode which allows for

smooth acceleration and braking with one pedal.

As befits his engineering background, Mr Nazirul has already made some modifications to the car, including a digital controller to adjust throttle sensitivity, BC coilover suspension for improved handling, Bridgestone Potenza RE004 ultra-high-performance tyres for better grip, and a bodykit to give it some road presence.

He estimates that he has spent about \$5,000 on the modifications.

He allowed this contributor some time behind the wheel of his Note e-Power, and it is clear that the tweaks made by the engineer-to-be have imparted some vim and vigour to the hatchback.

But Mr Nazirul also drives another kind of electric car. Hopping out of the hatchback, he dons a race suit and full-face helmet and slips behind the helm of the R23e, the latest incarnation of the Formula SAE race car built by NUS engineering students.

Weighing a scant 228kg and boasting 135hp, the all-electric R23e is designed to meet the Formula SAE Electric standards, a student design competition organised by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). Mr Nazirul is the team leader for this year's car and one of the drivers.

Electric power may bring refinement and serenity to Mr Nazirul's daily commute, but it brings explosive acceleration to his race car. The agile handling of the lithe R23e slipping among the cones at a recent test-run is also a far cry from the comparatively ponderous Note.

The NUS team will be representing Singapore at the upcoming



Mr Muhammad Nazirul Syahmi modified his Nissan Note e-Power to be more responsive, handle better and have more road presence. PHOTOS: MUHAMMAD NAZIRUL SYAHMI, WONG KAI YI

FSAE Michigan competition, in which it will challenge some of the top colleges in the world in both static engineering judging and dynamic time trials.

"After months of tireless preparation, it's all coming together as we embark on our first competition in three years after the pandemic. We are ready to show off our hard work," Mr Nazirul says.

True to form, the electric enthusiast is considering an electric vehicle (EV) for his next car, with his eye on the all-electric BMW iX3.

"I do dream of supercars, but I still prefer EVs, which are still beyond my means now. Hopefully, one day, I can achieve my goal of owning one," Mr Nazirul says.

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What's in the boot:

- Feather duster for cleaning the car
- Box containing his race helmet
- Box containing his race shoes
- Fire extinguisher