

Published Every Monday

Tick, tick, tick . . .

It only happens when you hit about 45 miles an hour.

Tick, tick, tick, tick . . .

Driver: "Did you hear that?"

Passenger: "Nope."

Could I be hearing things? There it is again!

Tick, tick, tick, tick . . .

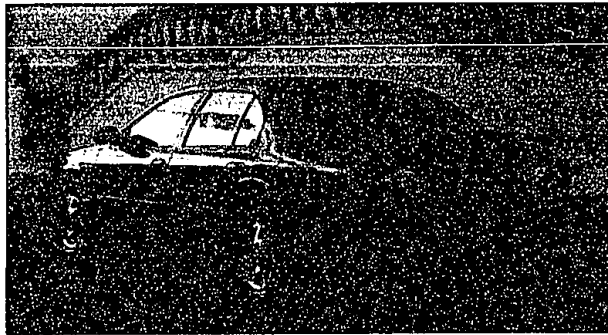
It's strange to hear anything like a tick, tick, tick in any of the new cars these days. Especially since Nissan promises the 1995 Maxima is the quietest it's ever been.

There it is again — tick, tick, tick, tick. . . . What is that sound? Strange. Rhythmic. Constant. Mighty annoying, too.

Tick, tick, tick, tick-tick,
tick, tick . . .

OHOOHHHH! That's what it is! It's the little red ribbon tied to my door handle making that noise. The ribbon ends are ticking on the side of the car.

You see, Nissan, together with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, sponsors a program around the holidays to give a new meaning to "tie one on." The red ribbons are attached to the test car as part of Nissan's "don't drink and



**ROAD
TEST**
By
Anne
Fracassa

drive" effort with MADD.

OK, now that the mystery that was ticking us off is out of the way, let's get to the meat and potatoes of this 1995 Maxima. Quiet is what the new redesign provides — minus the red ribbon, of course.

The new Maxima is still the same overall length and width as last year's, but the wheelbase has been extended 2 inches, due to a smaller

engine and suspension. More damping in the engine compartment and in key areas of the car — like soft-mount upper and lower shock absorber mounts — make it whisper-quiet on the inside. You don't even hear the engine running with the windows rolled up tight.

And the ride and handling rival the first Infinitis. The rear struts have been replaced by a multi-link beam suspension package that provides wonderful ride comfort due to minimum camber change during cornering, and softer bushings, springs and shocks.

Because of the new suspension and its compact placement, there's a larger rear seat (over an inch more leg room) and front and rear head room is about a half inch more as well.

Exterior changes are evi-

dent in the first redesign for Maxima. The front has been smoothed out and has rounder corners. The rear deck has been lifted for a more aggressive look.

On the interior, there's comfort all around. The instrument panel is exactly like Infiniti's — soft white backlight numbers on an all-black rear. The needles are also a brighter white, making instrumentation pleasing. It's also analog all around. The switches and controls are placed strategically and the placement of the stereo and climate controls are easy to reach and easier to operate than the previous-generation Maxima.

This four-door is spacious in the interior and the doors open wide for easy access. The trunk area is larger than most four-doors; bet you can fit six bags of clubs back

there.

The car tested had a power driver's seat that I had a hard time getting comfortable in. It was difficult to operate because the switches are so far back on the seat you have to open the door to make them work. You have to fiddle around too much because it's not obvious what each of the two buttons do, unless you get out and look at them.

One more concern — this car cries out for a truck-release latch. It's a shame to have such spacious cargo and have to open the trunk with a key.

The 3.0-liter dual overhead cam V-6 powerplant is 50-percent lighter than the previous-generation V-6. It's a quiet engine that provides 190 horsepower and has respectable acceleration for an automatic — 0-60 in 8.8 seconds. That's 2 seconds quicker than the Maxima's previous engine.

Its redesign included placing the alternator, air-conditioning compressor and power steering pump in strategic areas to reduce the overall size of the engine. This engine is also 80 percent lower in surface roughness and friction.

It's smooth, it's quiet —
what more do you want?

The new Maxima gets better gas mileage than before, too, with the 5-speed you'll see 22 mpg in the city, 27 on the highway; with the 4-speed automatic you'll get 21 in the city and 28 on the

highway

On the safety side, there are dual air bags up front, anti-lock brakes are standard, three-point belts for all outboard passengers, child safety door locks, energy-absorbing steering column, front and rear crumple zones and it meets 1997 federal side impact standards.

With the new Maxima, Nissan hopes to conquest mostly Honda Accord, Toyota Camry and current Altima owners who want to move up, as well as current Maxima owners.

"We've increased the wheelbase, increased roominess and taken it up a notch on the luxury side," said Earl Hesterberg, vice president and general manager of Nissan Division. "It's a responsible luxury sedan that surpasses the high standards of the current Maxima."

That's about right.
Anne Fracassa is senior editor of *Avanti NewsFeatures*.

1995 Nissan Maxima
 Vehicle class...Luxury sedan
 Engine...3.0-liter dual over
 head cam V-6
 Mileage.....21 city / 28 highway
 Where built.....Japan
 Base price\$20,999

If you'd like to see a particular model tested or if you have a car question, send Anne Fracassa a message at AVANTI1054, Avanti's America Online mailbox. Or comment through the Internet at AVANTI1054@aol.com.

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