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It's what's inside that counts on Nissan's Pathfinder

CARReport



By Anne Fracassa
 Avanti NewsFeatures

ANNE
 FRACASSA

There are lots and lots of changes
 to the new Nissan Pathfinder.

And one change that needs no, definitely needs to be
 changed.

As you already know, I love it that more and more
 vehicles have the option to add a mobile entertainment
 system to keep the back seat passengers quiet and out
 of your hair.

The mobile entertainment system in the 2002
 Pathfinder is available with a DVD or video cassette
 player that's mounted in the rear cargo area. Yep, I said
 mounted.

Now, if you're going down the street to the local
 grocery store or even across town to visit relatives, you're
 gonna be OK. But take a trip that's longer than the
 average video cassette tape (approximately 90 minutes
 or less) and you're now stopping the car, getting out,
 popping the video out and inserting another one.

Makes for a lot of rest stops if you've got a major-mile
 trip planned, even if it was mounted in back of the rear
 seats, close enough that the rear seat passengers could
 access it without taking off their three-point seat belts,
 I could live with it.

But with it mounted so far back, it just doesn't make
 any sense to me.

Enough of that nonsense. I only had one other com-
 plaint. The Pathfinder only had one pair of wireless
 headphones in it. And they didn't even work. So I had
 to listen to the video all the time.

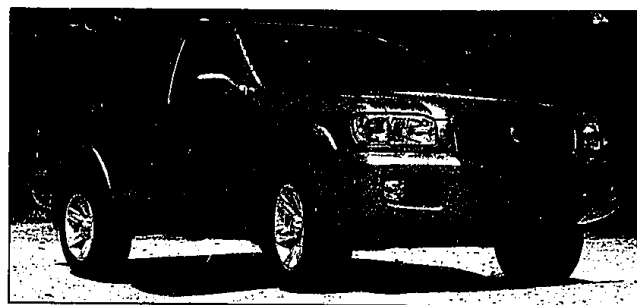
But the entertainment system was beautiful. And the
 wireless headphones are a great idea, too.

Let's get on to what most people would want to know
 about the Pathfinder.

On the outside, you'll find a new front grille and a
 new Nissan badge. The bumpers and fender flares are
 body color now. The front of the Pathfinder looks ex-
 actly how it should: Aggressive. Curves are everywhere
 and they're all well placed.

There's a new engine, too. It's a 3.5-liter dual over-
 head cam V6 aluminum block engine that promises and
 delivers 250 horsepower with a manual transmission. I
 was lucky. I had the automatic, which got me 10 horses
 less. No matter how powerful is more than adequate for a
 sport utility of this size.

You'll have a choice of rear-wheel-drive, part-time
 shift-on-the-fly 4-wheel driver or full-time 4-wheel-



One fine SUV: 2002 Nissan Pathfinder. Vehicle class: Sport utility vehicle. Power:
 3.5-liter DOHC V-6 engine. Mileage: 12 city/21 highway. Where built: Japan.
 Price as tested \$34,285.

drive model. I liked the full-time 4-wheel-drive model.
 You may sacrifice a little mileage, but it's worth it, just
 for peace of mind. Here in Michigan, it's easy to get
 sunburned and frostbitten in a single week.

A little bit of trivia: The Pathfinder was introduced in
 1986, and went through some tweaking for the 1999
 and 2001 model years. This Pathfinder is the second
 generation.

There are several trim levels to choose from, depend-
 ing on the level of equipment you desire. The 4x2 SE
 and LE trims are only available with automatic trans-
 missions, while the 4x4 SE and LE are available in
 both manual and automatic transmissions.

The SE models are very nicely equipped and you're
 not upgrading to the LE model just because you want
 air conditioning or a better sound system.

For example, the LE will add stuff like better rated
 tires, halogen fog lights, 17-inch aluminum alloy
 wheels, body-color outside mirrors, roof rack, running
 boards, outside temperature gauge and digital compass,
 wood-tone trim, sunroof, cargo cover, automatic tempera-
 ture control, double sun visor, dual illuminated mir-
 rors, Homelink and the full-time 4-wheel drive system.

And all that's added to the huge-and I mean huge-list
 of standard equipment you'll find on the SE models.
 We're talking premium equipment here, folks.

Not that it matters to most, but the sound system
 made by Bose is awesome. We're talking an Am/Fm cas-
 sette 6-disc in-dash CD changer and steering wheel
 audio controls. Very, very nice touch. The entertainment
 system is also, of course, routed through the audio sys-
 tem, which makes action-packed movies feel like you're

right there.

Also available is a really neat 6.8-inch LCD screen
 dashboard-mounted navigation system. What's really
 cool about this navigation system is that it's got Nis-
 san's exclusive three-dimensional Birdview map dis-
 play.

What Birdview does is allow you to have an easy-to-
 read rolling display of roads, buildings and other points
 of interest from your guessed-it-a-bird's-eye view.

Some of the standard features you'll find on the
 Pathfinder include 8-way adjustable driver seat and a
 4-way adjustable front passenger seats that are comfy,
 comfy, comfy. Nissan put fatigue-reducing higher den-
 sity foam on the sides to prevent sliding in the seats and
 low density foam in the center for comfort on long driv-
 es.

The rear seat is a 60/40 split bench. The safety issues
 are also taken care of nicely and include dual front air
 bags, front seat belts with pre-tensioners, side-door
 guard beams, front and rear crumple zones, an energy-
 absorbing steering column, security system with
 remote keyless entry, child safety rear door locks and
 child seat anchors with three tether points. And if you
 choose to order a leather interior, you'll get front
 seat side-impact air bags as well.

Whatever you choose on the Pathfinder, you won't
 be disappointed. Fine SUV, fine family car, fine sin-
 gle person car. I'm telling you, you won't be disap-
 pointed.

Anne Fracassa is editor of Avanti News-Features.
 Write Anne Fracassa at avanti1054@aol.com.

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