

AUTOMOTIVE

Coming this spring — Nissan Sentra 2001

Nissan will introduce the 2001 Sentra sedan in the spring that will be all-new, larger and more powerful.

The new Sentra was one of the hits of the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. It comes to Canadian show rooms in the spring.

This is the first Sentra designed exclusively for North America. It is also the first North American car to be created as part of Nissan's new vehicle platform and component strategy.

"The 2000 Sentra is quite revolutionary in how it evolved," said Ian Forsyth, marketing director and head of product planning for Nissan Canada Inc. "It blends the best of global engineering in a package designed specifically to meet the needs and wants of Canadian and American customers."

The exterior of the 2001 Sentra was styled at Nissan Design International, Inc. (NDI) in La Jolla, Calif. by a team led by Diane Allen.

All Sentras will be manufactured at one of the newest Nissan plants in the world, in Aguascalientes, Mexico.

The new Sentra will be available in three levels of trim and equipment - XE, GXE and SE. Two four-cylinder engines will be offered - an all-new 1.8-litre in the XE and GXE, and a more potent 2.0 litre unit in the sporty SE.

Forsyth said two goals drove initial development of the new Sentra: 1) tightly control costs by employing advanced technologies such as platform sharing and high strength Zone Body construction; and 2) then re-invest the savings in creation of a stylish and comfortable new-



2001 Nissan Sentra SE

generation sedan that will exceed customer expectations of performance, quality and value.

Literally the foundation for this was Nissan's use of a global platform. The shared platform enabled development time to be reduced from 30 months to 19.

The new Sentra shares its global platform with six other models in Europe and Japan, with more variations likely to emerge in the future.

"Nissan's new platform strategy has clearly allowed us to have the best of both worlds the development time, cost and quality improvements of a world-class platform with the unique look, feel and performance tuning for our home market," said Forsyth. "The strategy allows us the freedom to create models as varied as the Sentra XE or the truly sporty Sentra SE."

The overall length was stretched 165 mm (6.5 inches) to 4509 mm (177.5 in-

ches) and the body widened by 20 mm (0.8 inches) to 1709 mm (67.3 inches). Height was also raised 28 mm (1.1 inches) to 1410 mm (55.5 inches).

The front of the new Sentra features an expressive hood with subtle surface forms, a large, bumper and fascia and integrated headlights and grille. The new Sentra offers a 30 per cent improvement in torsional rigidity over its predecessor, due in part to an additional (third) floor pan cross-member.

The driver's seat now has eight-way adjustments and the hip point was raised 20 millimeters and expanded 10 millimeters for easier entry and exit. The seat design provides an open feeling through use of a large, one-piece cut pattern around the shoulder area.

A 60/40 split fold-down rear seat with locking seat backs is standard on all models. Three types of cloth are available, depending on model and trim levels.



2001 Honda CR-V

Popular Honda CR-V fits variety of budgets

One of the more popular sport utility vehicles around is Honda's versatile, all-weather CR-V. Last year, the CR-V received a much-needed 20-horsepower boost, giving it just-right performance on the highway and punchier throttle response around town.

For 2000, The CR-V's winning formula for success remains untouched. Standard power remains the 2.0-litre DOHC four-cylinder engine that delivers 146 horsepower.

With that, you get your choice of five-speed manual or optional four-speed automatic transmission with the shifter mounted on the column. The shifter's location allows for a handy pass-through area between the front seats. Standard equipment includes air conditioning, power windows and door locks, cruise control, four-speaker stereo and a host of other helpful goodies.

With a full complement of comfort and convenience features, from optional ABS to a fold out picnic table, the CR-V will please a wide variety of buyers on different budgets.

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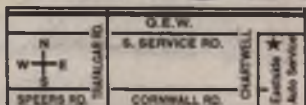


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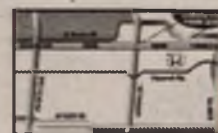
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Sporting heritage

(Cont'd from pg. A8) his time of year), body color bumpers, tilt steering wheel, intermittent wipers, low washer fluid warning light, adjustable front seatbelt anchors, and factory-installed children's seatbelt anchors (three) for the back seat.

The SE adds a tach and a stereo with four speakers, clock and CD player. You also get rear 60/40 split seats and a trunk lid.

There is also a 2000 Protegé Touring Edition (\$19,300 as tested) with 15-inch alloy wheels, wider all-season radial tires, antilock brakes, power moon roof, map lights and rear spoiler.

A lot of the sporting heritage Mazda engineered into the RX-7, MX-6, MX-3 and the current Miata have migrated into the Protegé. Even with the 1.6-litre engine, it is quite a little handler with MacPherson independent front with sway bars while the rear suspension incorporates Mazdas' patented Twin-Trapezoidal Link like the MX-6 sports coupe. That results in an econobox with a roll rate of just two degrees in 0.5g of cornering. That's right in there with the BMW M3. The shocks have ultra-low speed valves that make the chassis absorb kinetic road inputs. That results in a more stable and flat platform for the driver.

It's hard to find much wrong with the Protegé. Besides a somewhat rubbery feel to the five speed shifter and a very light clutch better suited to the Miata the Protegé offers a lot of zip, a lot of room, and a lot of kilometres for the litre.

The only thing missing from the Protegé sedan is a stablemate like the 323 Familia (what they call the Protegé) Wagon sold in Japan. We can only hope.