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Now in its third generation, the 2011 Honda CR-V is still a rugged, practical family hauler with car-like passenger comforts and the stability of four-wheel-drive. All this comes with the company's reputation for outstanding build quality. (Inset) CR-V offers superb fit and finish on the inside, especially in the top-trim EX-L Navi model, which includes premium content like leather seating surfaces, upgraded audio system, navigation with rearview camera and more.

Honda CR-V still popular in highly competitive segment

By **NEIL MOORE**
*Metroland Media Group
Carguide Magazine*

When the Honda CR-V launched in 1997, along with rival Toyota RAV4, it helped define the compact SUV segment in Canada.

It offered a more fuel efficient, more agile alternative to the monster, truck-based sport utilities of the day, and quickly proved itself as the ideal vehicle for hauling small families and their stuff— whether around town or on snowy cottage roads.

The CR-V's 126 hp, 2.0-litre inline four-cylinder was no powerhouse, but it was still fun to drive and brought plenty of buyers to the Honda nameplate.

Since then this vehicle has grown a little in size, substantially in horsepower, and even further in terms of styling and content.

Recent changes include a redesign in 2007 and a refresh in 2010. The CR-V, now in its third generation, is unchanged for 2011.

The 2010 refresh included minor updates to the front fascia, grille and rear bumper, along with a few colour changes and added content availability.

There was also a bump in horsepower from 166 to 180, but torque remains at 161 lb/ft.

But after all these updates and styling tweaks, the CR-V still looks remarkably similar to the original. Sure it's more polished, but its trucky, tall-box design has aged gracefully and offers the kind of passenger and cargo

room that are hard to find in some of today's curvy crossovers.

On that note, CR-V's cargo volume— at 2,064 litres when you fold and tumble the 60/40 second-row seats— is on par with 'trucky' competitors like Mitsubishi Outlander, Suzuki Grand Vitara and Toyota RAV4.

It also has the edge on the Ford Edge and is substantially roomier than the sleek Kia Sportage at 1,547 litres.

Some competitors, like Edge, RAV4, Outlander and Chevrolet Equinox offer both four- and six-cylinder models. The CR-V is only available with a 2.4 litre, four-cylinder i-VTEC engine. But if I had any doubt about Honda's decision to stick with a four, it evaporated when I pressed the pedal.

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