

Mazda2 to include new brake override system

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pronounced wheel flares, the Mazda2 looks firmly planted and conveys a strong sense of forward motion.

The 2011 Mazda2 is available in two trim levels, GX and GS. Both are powered by a 1.5-litre, 16-valve DOHC inline four that delivers 100 hp and 98 lb/ft of torque. This engine is mated to a five-speed manual transmission as standard, with an optional four-speed automatic for an extra \$1,100.

All models get a full suite of safety and handling technologies that include anti-lock brakes with electronic brakeforce distribution and brake assist, six air bags, Dynamic Stability Control and Traction Control.

The Mazda2 will also be the first Mazda vehicle launched in North America to include the company's brake override system.

It's not something I would have considered prior to Toyota's sticking accelerator problems, just over a year ago, but this kind of system, which prioritizes the brake pedal over the accelerator when they're both pressed together, is really a no-brainer. Mazda is planning to roll it out to all future Mazda vehicles in North America for 2011.

The entry-level GX, which starts at \$13,995, is pretty basic by today's standards. Still, you get power locks, windows and mirrors, intermittent rear wiper, tilt steering, and a two-speaker AM/FM/CD/MP3 audio system.

You don't get the body-coloured rear spoiler, which really adds to the look of this vehicle. Neither do you receive alloy wheels, as a set of bland 15-inch steel rims with wheel covers come standard.

The GX can be optioned up with air conditioning at \$1,195 and the Convenience Package at \$895. The latter, in particular, is a good value and includes heated mirrors, keyless entry, steering-wheel mounted cruise and audio controls, exterior temperature readout, trip computer, body-coloured door mirrors and handles, silver accents and two extra speakers.

The top-tier GS starts at \$18,195 and includes all of the above. It also adds 15-inch alloys, side sill extensions, rear spoiler, chrome exhaust finisher, automatic headlights, rain-sensing wipers, leather-wrapped steering wheel, air conditioning and two more speakers for a total of six.

The Mazda2 Yozora, based on the entry GX with air and convenience package, includes a hand picked selection of custom accessories available to personalize this vehicle.

This hipper version of the 'two' starts at \$19,280 and includes a raised rear spoiler, chrome tailpipe, stubby antenna and low-profile Toyo performance tires mounted on 16-inch alloy wheels. My tester, however, came with winter tires on 15-inch steel rims, also included in the package.

Yozora means 'night sky' in Japanese, so this model appropriately sports a black exterior finish with a '2' themed decal package on the front driver's side bumper

and fender.

The interior of all Mazda2 models is surprisingly spacious with loads of room up front, and plenty of knee and shoulder room in rear. Because of the lowered roof line and slightly raised seating, there's less headroom in back, but enough for those of us under six feet tall.

Behind the 60/40 split-fold seats there is a cargo capacity of 377 litres. Drop them and that grows to 787 litres.

Driving dynamics are surprisingly good for a vehicle in this segment, with the front independent Mac struts (with stabilizer bar) and rear torsion beam suspension providing a nice balance between cruising comfort and taut handling in the corners.

You'd think a modest 100 horses wouldn't provide much of a fun factor, but in the Mazda2 with five-speed manual, this is more than enough power to move this 1,051 kg vehicle smartly off the line, not to mention passing confidently on the highway.

The Mazda2, with a good set of winter tires, stability control and traction control, was more than capable in the snow. Sure, I didn't have to plow through any major winter storms, but did encounter the typical slushy, snowy roads you'd expect this time of year.

And believe me, when I swapped the little hatch for my larger daily driver (which has good tires, but none of technologies) I noticed a quantum difference in both handling and confidence.

I am encouraged by today's trend to-



You'll find 377 litres of cargo space behind the 60/40 split-fold seats. Drop them and that grows to 787 litres.

wards building content-rich, fun-to-drive subcompacts, with trim levels that cater to a variety of budgets, and personalization options that let you create a vehicle that is truly your own.

With the Mazda2, you also get stellar fuel economy along with the company's solid reputation for build quality and the zoom-zoom that comes with every one of their vehicles.

(Mazda2 'Yozora' Edition 2011 at a glance)

BODY STYLE: subcompact five-door hatchback

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, front-wheel-drive

ENGINE: 1.5-litre, 16-valve DOHC inline four-cylinder (100 hp and 98 lb/ft of torque)

FUEL ECONOMY: 6.8/5.6 L/100 km (with six-speed manual)

PRICE: (base GX) \$13,995; (GS trim) \$18,195; Yozora Edition: \$19,280

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