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1999 Dodge Ram Quad Cab pickup definitely has a presence on the road

by Rob Beintema
 Special to the Independent/Free Press

Presence.

It's almost impossible to describe the qualities of any vehicle in just one word but if I had to sum up the characteristics of the 1999 Dodge Ram, then yes, I'd say it has presence.

Size, styling, power and the intangibles of the Dodge Ram legacy make it the kind of full-size pickup truck that just seems to fill up your rear view mirror.

The big rig styling makeover of the '94 model year revolutionized truck design and set the styling trend for almost all of the pickups of today. And last year, while other manufacturers were wrestling a third door into their pickups, Chrysler, again, went one better, introducing the '98 Quad Cab, a four-door extended cab version.

The Dodge Ram comes in a wide variety of sizes,

strengths and configurations. Regular Cab, Quad Cab and Club Cab models offer seating for 2 to 6 passengers. Standard or automatic, 4x2 or 4x4. Three weight classes, 1500, 2500 and 3500 models, allow you to pick the truck to match your payload. And you can weigh those demands against a list of five different powerplants.

Regular Cab models start with the base 3.9 L 175 hp V6. Two V8s are offered, a 5.2 L that makes 230 horses and a 5.9 L rated at 245 hp @ 4000 rpm. The top-of-the-line 8.0 L Magnum V10 squeezes out an extra 10 horses for '99, to a new top end of 310 hp. For maximum workhorse grunt, an all-new 5.9 L Cummins Turbo Diesel makes 235 hp and an impressive 460 lb-ft of torque.

My '99 tester was a 1500 Quad Cab 4X4 model powered by the brawny 5.9 L V8, strutting on 16" alloy wheels and wrapped in ominous black. But the Dodge Ram is an impressive truck in any color and handsome from any angle. The big nosed, Kenworth-styled design still works, is

still pleasing to the eye.

The good looks carry over into the interior, where the combinations of room, soft-touch ergonomics and overall excellence of fit and finish make for a very livable cabin space.

"Each year, as the full-size pickup becomes a more accepted part of the mainstream vehicle mix, the demands it must fulfill become greater," said Jim Julow, General Manager of the Dodge Division. "It must be stylish, passenger-friendly and as comfortable as it is capable."

And comfortable, it is. Front bench seating is roomy. This is one of those rare vehicles where I don't feel the need to move the seat all the way back. Which is just as well because fitting adults in the rear seat does require some move-up compromise from front seat occupants. Extended cabs are meant for occasional passengers and require some

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