

Stylish, functional Rogue has wide appeal

By JOCK MCCLEARY

Nissan's new Rogue enters a rapidly expanding market-place in the highly competitive small crossover-utility vehicle segment.

Rogue certainly looks the part with its aggressive, performance-oriented styling suggesting power and utility.

The Rogue will appeal to two groups in particular: the young, stylish 30-something who likes to look the part and appreciates performance, and the young family with a couple of kids who require functionality with style but who still enjoy being young and expressing it.

I drove the fully loaded SL model with all-wheel-drive, which quickly became a necessity in what would turn out to be a very snowy and ice-covered test drive.

The Rogue comes in four flavours; in S and SL trim levels and FWD and AWD models. Both are equipped with an inline 2.5-litre DOHC engine pushing out a respectable 170 hp.

All models come with Nissan's advanced Xtronic CVT (continuously variable transmission) as well four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock braking system (ABS) as standard equipment. The vehicle I drove was equipped with the all-new intuitive all-wheel drive system, which also incorporated a yaw moment control and the standard vehicle dynamic control (VDC) and traction control system (TCS).



The Rogue's dash layout and centre console use plenty of metallic accents to complement an otherwise dark interior. Although not visible here, there's a multifunction display between the silver-ringed speedo and tach.



I picked up the car in Montréal the morning after what was a record snowfall for the time of year (early December).

It quickly became apparent that the AWD drive system was very capable of handling the snow-covered streets of this historic city. The VDC and TCS were working overtime (albeit in the background), keeping the Rogue straight and

in line on the road.

The optional steering wheel-mounted paddle shifters came into their own when trying to control the engine revs while negotiating some of the larger snow piles.

The advanced traction systems performed flawlessly and were hardly noticeable in their actions, the only sign that they were working being that the Rogue stayed on the road and travelling in the right direction.

The engine is quiet and has great fuel economy, delivering 9.5L/100 km in the city and 7.7 L/100 km for the AWD version with the front wheel drive coming in below that with 9.1L/100 km and 7.2L/100 km respectively.

In fact, the front-wheel-drive version is one of the first non-hybrid vehicles to qualify for the Canadian government's ecoAUTO Rebate program for fuel efficiency, which saves buyers a further \$1,000 against what is already a competitively priced vehicle in its class.

On the highway, Rogue runs quietly and responsively with little engine or wind noise. The available heated seats were appreciated as well as the easily set up Bluetooth hands-free phone system that keeps your eyes and concentration on the road where it should be.

The driver's seating area has a cockpit-like feel to it with all gauges easy to read and all controls within easy reach.

The Rogue has been specifically designed to appeal to the 30-something market, which I think Nissan has easily achieved.

Nissan took the time to actually look closely at the needs of today's drivers. From lots of convenient and large storage spaces to the available Bose audio, XM Satellite Radio and MP3 player system, not only has Nissan managed to make the interior attractive and functional, the exterior styling is also appealing with an aggressive stance and commanding presence in its class.

Whether it's a young mother dropping off the kids at the school or a young urbanite cruising the downtown streets en route to the theatre, Rogue addresses many needs with an impressive price tag and great fuel economy.



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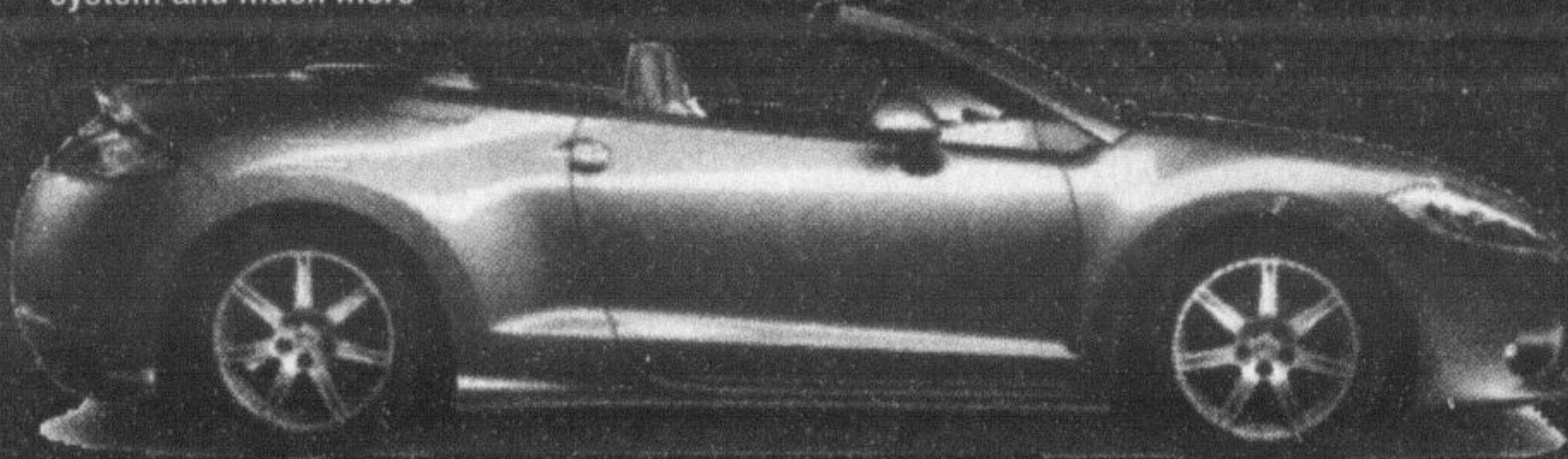
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