

# Good on gas. Easy on the wallet.

• from NISSAN on page A42

alloys.

It also comes standard with a six-speed manual, with the Xtronic CVT (continuously variable transmission) available for another \$1,300.

My tester was the 1.8 SL, which included the CVT and the \$1,100 Navigation Package.

I could do without the former, but the latter package is a steal. Sure, the nav screen is only five inches diagonally, but it's bigger than a lot of aftermarket units and includes Bluetooth, XM satellite radio, USB, and leather-wrapped steering wheel with audio controls.

The screen can also be used for audio settings and setup preferences. That's a lot of tech for just over a grand, and I always prefer the look and function of a factory-installed system.

Everything is well positioned and easy to use, and the "double-thickness foam" front seats are about as plush as your favourite recliner.

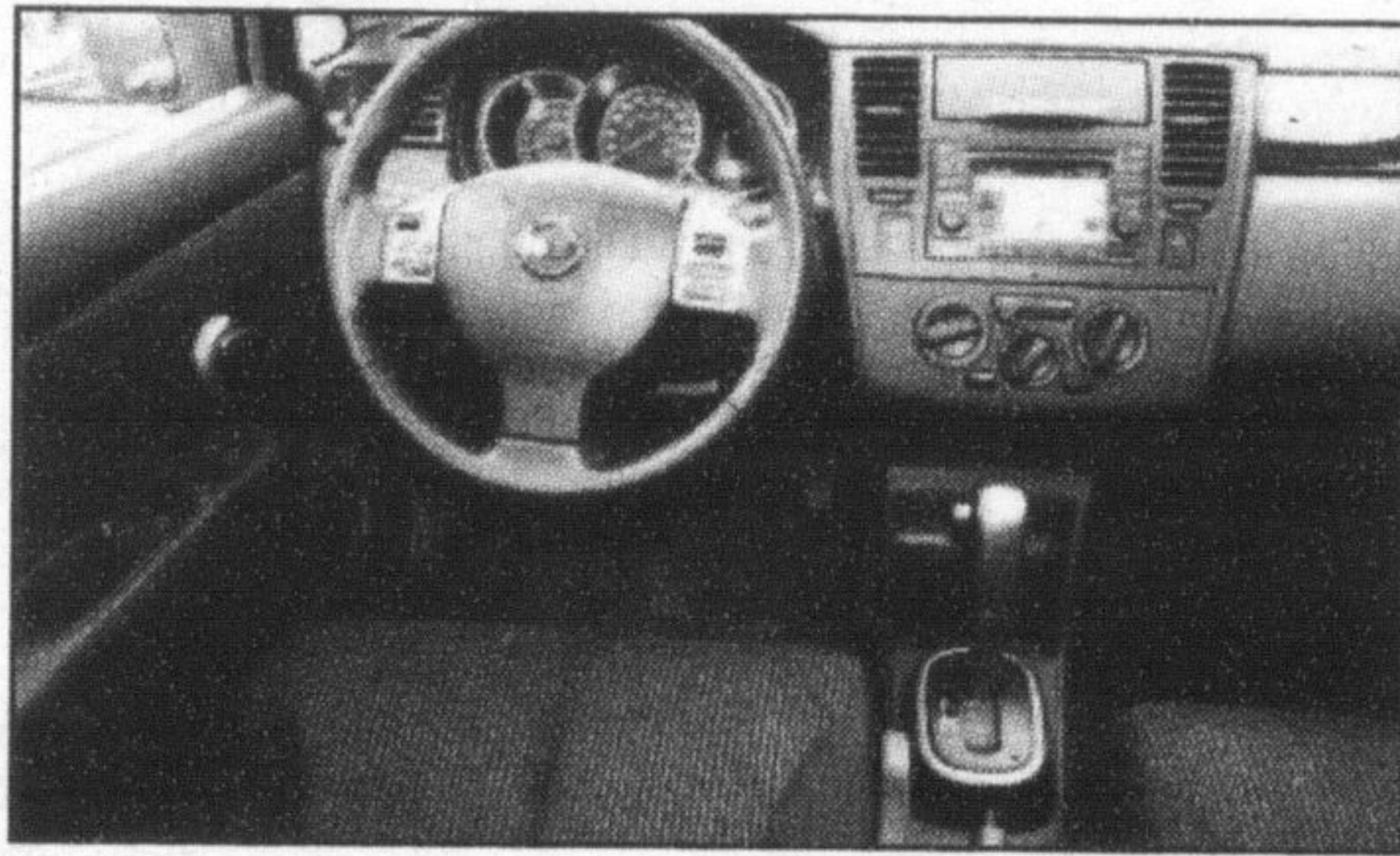
They are wide as well, which is all the better to cushion the larger North American derriere.

Door armrests are also well padded, and the cabin is quiet. Nissan's use of sound deadening materials is effective in the Versa, keeping out much of the road and engine noise.

Wind noise is minimal as well, thanks in part to a tall-box design that is surprisingly aerodynamic, with a drag coefficient of 0.31.

All Versa Hatchbacks are equipped with a 1.8-litre DOHC 16-valve four-cylinder engine that delivers a solid 122 hp and 127 lb/ft of torque. This bests such competitors as Fit, Rio5, Yaris and Aveo5, but keep in mind that the Versa is also the heaviest of this group.

Acceleration with the CVT is a bit leisurely



Not typically available at the entry level is the Versa's navigation package. For \$1,100 you get a five-inch screen along with Bluetooth, XM satellite radio, USB, and leather-wrapped steering wheel with audio controls.

off the line, but builds quickly. Unlike typical automatic transmissions which give you a bit of a kick with each gear change, the CVT climbs to a high rpm, which is just under 6,000 when you push the Versa, and stays there until you reach your speed.

This can sound a little buzzy when you accelerate hard, but quickly settles down when you back off the gas. Around town, this transmission is quiet and well behaved.

Overall, the Versa is a pleasant little car with a surprising amount of space for passengers and cargo.

Power is more than generous when you consider the competition, and you do get a lot of content for the dough.

If you're looking for a head-turner, you'd better keep looking. But if you need a practical family car that is comfortable, good on gas and easy on the wallet, the Versa should be near the top of your list.

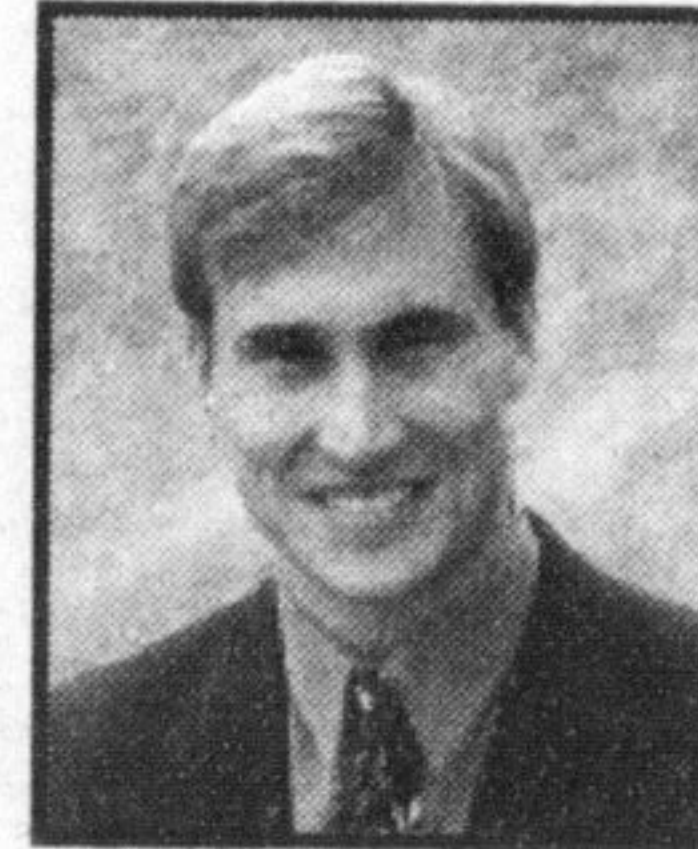
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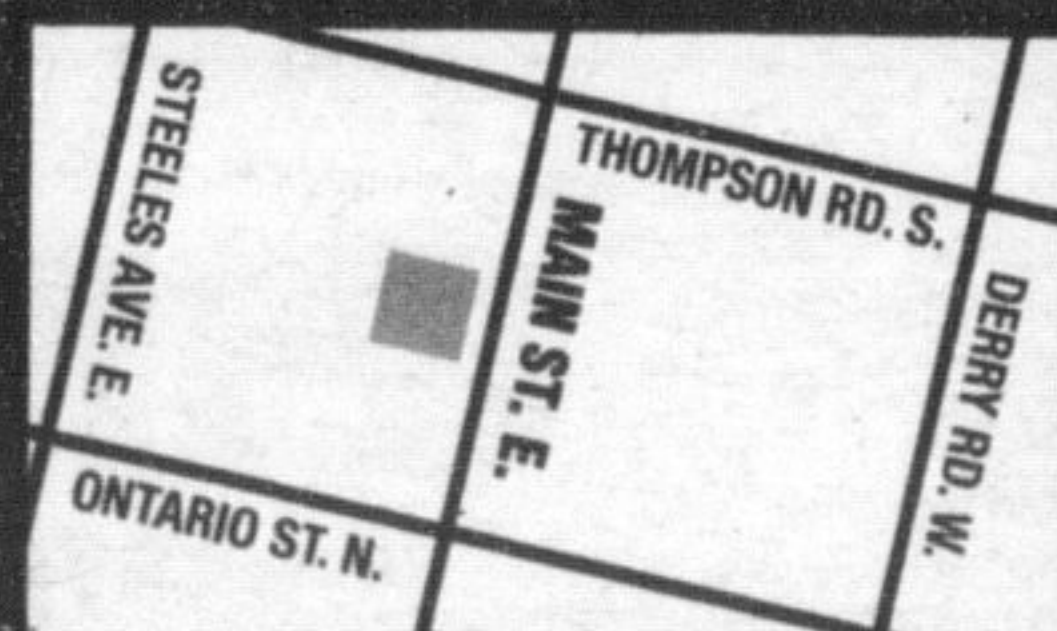
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