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Dodge Dakota Quad Cab redefines image of compact pickup truck

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SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

don't know what to make of pickup trucks anymore. Every time I think I've got a handle on them, somebody ups and changes the rules on me.

It used to be so simple. Pickup trucks had two doors and steel floors. A bench seat, a bucket in back and enough horses under the hood to haul butt and booty from Point "A" to Point "B" with no fuss, no muss, no extras.

Fast forward to the present and the 2000 Dodge Dakota Quad Cab, a compact pickup truck with 4 doors and seating for up to 6 passengers. The new Quad Cab first debuted at the Detroit Auto Show in early '99, promising the perfect combination of power, passenger room and payload potential. To satisfy all those competing criteria, you'd expect some sort of cobbled-together, in-between vehicle making more compromises than a showgirl at a casting call, wouldn't you?

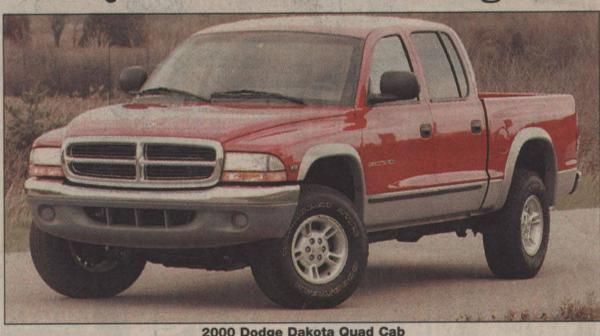
But the Dakota Quad Cab has stayed true to its Raminspired image, maintaining the utility, cargo-carrying capability, truck-like toughness and even the spirit of a pickup while delivering the seating, space and modern amenities and comforts of a family sedan.

"We've maximized the utility of a compact pickup," said Jim Julow, VP of Dodge Car & Truck Division. "By combining the power and capability of a Dodge Dakota with sixpassenger seating in a full four-door configuration, we've developed a pickup that can fit any need -- whether it's power, passengers or payload."

The Dodge Dakota Quad Cab Comes in two trim levels -- the base Sport and the upscale SLT. Both versions come with a choice of three Magnum engines.

The base motor for all Cab feels roomy. Chrysler Dakota models is a 3.9 L V6 may call this a compact truck that makes 175 hp @ 4800 rpm and 225 lb-ft of torque @3200. You can't help but notice the large percentage of pickups that spend most of their time running around empty. This is a good engine for all those commuter pickups that are posing as trucks rather than working as trucks. The V6 comes mated to an improved, standard 5-speed manual transmission. Optional automatics are available for all engine choices.

For a little more punch



2000 Dodge Dakota Quad Cab

fine for four, squeezable for six.

under the hood, consider a step

up the power ladder to

Chrysler's new 4.7 L V8. This

engine recently replaced the

5.2 L and 5.9L motors in the

Grand Cherokee. As tested in my SLT, the 16-valve SOHC

engine harnesses 235 horses

@ 4800 rpm and 295 lb-ft of

torque @ 3200 rpm. Even

though the Quad Cab is ham-

pered by 500 lb more mass

than the Grand Cherokee, the

motor moves the Dakota

smartly and quietly with a just

a muted hum and discreet

intake whistle from under the

hood. But consider your

power needs carefully. V8

power means V8 fuel consumption. And much as I love

that instant-on acceleration, I

rue the pump penalty that

almost doubles my weekly

for displacement," the trailer-

hauling crowd will tell you. If

you're regularly hauling the

family yacht or summer home over hill and dale, the top of

the Magnum engine lineup

peaks the power with a 5.9 L

overhead-valve V8 making

245 hp @ 4400 and a stump-

pulling torque rating of 335 lb-

but the Dodge Dakota really

became more of a mid-size offering when they increased

the dimensions for the '97

model year. With the addition-

al space added to the 4-door

version, Quad Cab interior

volumes match up well against

handles in front and rear. All

four doors are front hinged.

The rear doors are smaller than the front doors but they swing

open almost 90 degrees for

easy entry and exit. Seating is

Access is aided by grab

those of many mid-size cars.

Inside, the Dakota Quad

ft @ 3200 rpm.

There's no replacement

fuel bill.

In front, a large console with storage space, cassette, coin and pen slots, flips up to provide a short seat back for a middle passenger. There's also room for a third person in the back row. Uh, better make that a skinny third person.

The Dakota's interior is a very com-

from ergonomics to instrumentation to ride and handling shows a level of refinement unheard of in pickups of the past.

The payload story of the Dakota Quad Cab actually begins inside the truck. Flip up either or both of the 60/40 rear seats and the increased passenger room converts into 736 L (26 cu.ft) of secure, staydry, in-cab storage space. Out back, the shortened 1602 mm (63") box keeps the Quad Cab a garageable length (about the same length as the extended cab version) while still offering tiedown hooks, load-divider slots and 658 kg (1450 lb) of payload capacity. The shorter box length doesn't seem to bother most customers but you can gain back the lost fifteen inches with the tailgate down and an optional bed extender. The Dodge Dakota Quad Cab can be tow-rated up to 2880 kg (6350 lb).

The Dodge Dakota Quad Cab is one of the few options available right now for customers looking for greater versatility in their vehicles. Nissan offers a smaller 4-door pickup and other manufactures are approaching the same solution from different angles -- with the Nissan concept SUT and the future Lincoln Blackwood

and Ford Explorer Sport Trac. But trust Chrysler to be an

early innovator. After all, weren't they first with the 4door minivan and 4-door fullsize Ram pickup? The Dodge Dakota Quad

Cab offers a new option for customers looking for multipurpose value in a single vehicle. And it does so with a unique mixture of both utility and civility. You can Bubba-thump this

bruiser through the back forty and then hose it off and elegantly purr your party to Fifi's for champagne and scampi. Or load a passle of kids enroute to a little league game.

The Dakota seems equally at home in any setting, the exterior character and strength well matched with enough interior space and civility to equal the offerings of any well-appointed midsize sedan.



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