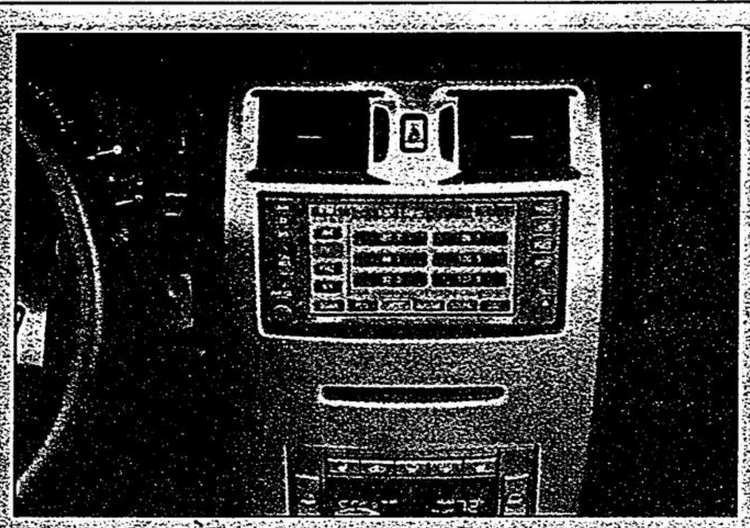
(ABOVE)- The Cadillac XLR's dynamic design and advanced technology has brought a striking new presence to the automotive spectrum.



(left) - Inside includes a 7-inch (178-mm) color touch screen mounted in the upper center console for DVD navigation.

2005 XLR is the ultimate in Cadillac style

BY ROB BEINTEMA

You say you're looking for the ultimate in Cadillac style?

A sports car may not be the first thing you think of (or an SUV like the Escalade, for that matter) but since it debuted in 2003, the Cadillac XLR has met with overwhelming response from the press, public and dealers alike.

For 2005, XLR makes only modest enhancements to interior and exterior - new Dark Eucalyptus wood inside and Blue Steel exterior paint replacing Thunder Gray.

The Cadillac XLR's dynamic design and advanced technology has brought a striking new presence to the automotive spectrum. A luxury roadster with performance car (Corvette) roots, XLR underscores its visual statement with a performance-oriented chassis and structure, and Cadillac's trademark 4.6L Northstar V-8 VVT (variable valve timing) rear-wheel-drive engine. This combination makes it the lightest, most powerful vehicle in its class.

Under its skin, the XLR's blend of technologies include a head-up display, adaptive cruise control, Magnetic Ride Control, StabiliTrak, heated and cooled seats, keyless access with push-button start and DVD navigation and entertainment. Inspired by angle-eccentric stealth fighter design, XLR takes the ongoing resurgence of Cadillac - led by Escalade and CTS - to a new level.

The XLR's linear, crisp look creates a dramatic icon for luxury and performance, yet it pays tribute to the marque's history. The XLR's strong grille, for example, harkens back to Cadillac's heritage while vertical headlamps, on the other hand, express the division's current design philosophy.

The XLR offers a retractable hard top. By pushing and holding a single button, the XLR can convert from coupe to open roadster in less than 30 seconds. The top is made of aluminum and magnesium with composite exterior panels, a heated glass backlight and glass rear-quarter windows.

The interior design strikes a nice balance of style and contemporary luxury. Unique eucalyptus wood in light or dark tones, combines with aluminum accents and gauges designed in conjunction with Italian luxury brand Bvlgari.

The XLR features the first longitudinal application of the 4.6L Northstar V-8. The engine features an aluminum block and cylinder heads. It generates 320 horsepower (239 kw) and 310 lb.-ft. (420 Nm) of torque.

The V-8 offers smooth, refined performance and operates cleanly and efficiently, with a record of excellent reliability and durability and is mated to the Hydra-Matic 5L50-E five-speed automatic transmission.

Another advantage of Cadillac's roadster not shared by the competition is its rear-mounted transmission. This helps give the XLR a virtual 50/50 front-to-rear weight distribution for superior balance, as well as providing occupants unusually roomy footwell space inside.

Compared to the Mercedes-Benz SL500, Jaguar XK8 and Lexus SC430, the XLR is not only the lightest vehicle at approximately 3,650 pounds (1,656 kg), but it also boasts the longest wheelbase, widest track, lowest height and most horsepower.

The XLR story starts with the backbone, based on GM's Corvette architecture, this unique and patented structure uses steel hydroformed perimeter frame rails, an enclosed structural "tunnel," an aluminum cockpit structure and balsa-cored com

See CADILLAC XLR, page 18.

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