



Leather trim standard; only driver's seat is power-adjustable. Comfort not rated highly by all. Middle seats split and fold.



somewhat pinched-in higher up. The flared wheelarches reminiscent of the Evo model (spun off from the victorious Paris-Dakar racers) were part of a facelift to the outgoing model, but this new look takes even that a step further.

The pumped-up flanks and streamlined curvy front are in

line with what Mitsubishi stylists have dubbed the "geo-mechanical" look they have been incorporating into their work. You don't have to look too far to see echoes of the radical SSU super sport-ute featured in our March 2000 issue. Some also noted hints of Nissan Patrol in the rear view, Toyota Prado in

the C/D pillar area, and even the SsangYong Musso up front.

The predecessor's clipped lines look more compact and, in fact, the new model's dimensions are greater in every respect except height. But whereas the roofline is lower and the floor height has been dropped for easier access, thanks to the monocoque body the ground clearance has been increased, and interior room is greater.

Standard convenience and luxury features on this fully imported model include climate control with auxiliary controls for the rear, CD front-loader, leather upholstery, dual front airbags, cruise control, and power window lifts with one-

touch operation all round.

Textured soft-touch plastics are a good match for the distinct flight-deck look of the fascia.

However, there are a couple of minor anomalies. For example, heated seats are all very well, but only the driver's seat has powered adjustment (for height, reach and tilt). Remote headlight angle adjustment would be useful, too. On the plus side, the separate switch for lowering the radio antenna to half-mast often comes in handy. And why don't others copy the extendable sun visors?

Accommodation is very good for four and an occasional fifth. One of our team complained of backache after an extended spell at the wheel, although he seemed to be in the minority. Legroom and headroom are excellent in the middle row of seats, but it's a bit of a squeeze for anything bigger than children on the pivoting rear bench. Yes, pivoting: it swings into an underfloor well to provide a 544 dm³ load area with a flat floor. Dropping the 60:40 split middle seats on their gas struts increases the load space to 1 784 dm³, measured by our ISO block method. Incidentally, the rear bench can be removed altogether, to provide even more packing space.

The new 3 200 cm³ engine, with double overhead cams actuating 16 valves, is based on the previous 2.8-litre unit. Turbocharged and intercooled, it churns out an impressive 121 kW at 3 800 r/min and 375 N.m at 2 000 r/min.

Much work has been done on cutting down engine noise and vibration. It shows in the eye-opening 6 dB drop in idling noise level compared with the old 2.8 model, which is even more remarkable because of the adoption of "noisier" direct injection. However, on the move the differences in sound levels are marginal.

In just about every other aspect, though, the differences are anything but marginal. You really will not be caught out in cut-and-thrust driving with the massive urge of the turbomotor, and its almost seamless co-operation with the new adaptive five-speed automatic 'box.

At 12.82 seconds from 0 to 100 km/h, there is not much in



Rear bench pivots downwards so that load area has a flat floor, or can be removed altogether to provide extra packing space in underfloor well.

