



# California dreamin'

## Clarkson could not fault the Murano

by JOHN JONES

THERE is a touch of California sunshine about Nissan's stylish crossover vehicle, the Murano.

The Murano owes its sweeping good looks to Nissan's design studio in California which was given the brief to create a new crossover sports utility vehicle with a highly sculpted shape containing a typical four-wheel drive stance with stylish lines.

And although it is clearly unlike any other model in the Nissan range, it does include much of Nissan's recent design cues such as the trapezoidal head and tail lamps also found on the 370z.

It is also powered by the same motor as the 370z, a powerful 3.5-litre V6 engine that has 191kW of power and 336Nm of torque.

The powerplant has a perfect partner in the CVT automatic transmission with a six-speed manual mode.

Between them they ensure smooth and responsive acceleration while virtually eliminating shift shock and better fuel economy (10.9-litres/100kms) than a conventional automatic transmission.

The Murano has a 1500kg towing capacity.

The drive is fed through an all-wheel drive set-up based on Nissan's All Mode 4x4 system combined with vehicle dynamic control and traction control to offer reassuring levels of traction and stability in all environments.

The anti-lock braking system sensors monitor wheel-slip and a rear-mounted electro mechanical clutch engages drive to the rear wheels — as much as 50 percent — as soon as the front wheels begin to slip.

The transmission can be locked in four-wheel drive below 10kmh for use in mud, snow or on any other unstable surface.

As well as the ABS brakes, the safety package includes electronic brakeforce distribution and brake assist.

The xenon headlights have power washers and an automatic levelling feature.

Passive safety components include six airbags, active front head restraints and anti-intrusion beams.

An exceptionally long wheelbase allows for maximum interior space and the large 18-inch alloys have been pushed out to the corners giving the Murano a planted look that is accentuated by the short overhangs at front and rear.

Inside, the Murano lays on the luxury starting with the extremely comfortable plush leather seating.

Then there is the Bose audio system with an in-dash six-stacker CD autochanger and steering wheel controls, dual zone climate control, power adjustable driver's seat, leather covered steering wheel and gear shift, cruise control, remote central locking with alarm and anti-theft immobiliser, electric windows and a multi-function drive computer that includes a big screen reversing camera.

A double-deck lockable centre floor console is big enough to take a laptop.

There is a push-button start for the intelligent key and you have to love the electronic boot opener that operates from the key or the dash. It is something to be really appreciated with an armful of groceries.

The door opens up to a boot big enough for a set of golf clubs and trundler.

The Murano is designed to bring a fresh approach to the SUV segment combining the best elements of a sports car with the added functionality of a four-wheel drive to create a very unique and desirable SUV.

It was a big ask, but those boffins in California have been more than equal to the task.

At the end of the day, this is the car that Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson said he could not fault.

The best possible praise indeed.



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**NISSAN MURANO**



**pictures: BURT LAMONT**