



# Kim plugs Tiida for Nissan

**Nissan's using some mildly raunchy TV ads for its Tiida, featuring a star from Sex and the City, writes DAVE MOORE.**

**T**he delightful Kim Cattrall will be pushing the Nissan range on TV from this month and let's hope she doesn't prove to be a lose-lose situation for the brand. After all, guys might think the car too girly as a result of her influence, while some ladies might take umbrage at her well-honed sex-appeal.

It's a pity, because the car is a pretty convincing package, more family than sexy, and priced well enough to draw the punters in the hard-fought C-segment.

Nissan couldn't have timed the Tiida more cleverly. Just as Honda's cavernous five-door Civic comes to the end of its cycle, without a hatchback follow-up, in comes the Tiida, as the only car that could have matched the Honda's interior capacity.

Introduced as a hatch and sedan range with the strangely-titled Wingroad wagon following on soon, the Tiida — the name is meant to signify the ebb and flow of the tide — will have a single 93kW, 174Nm, alloy 1.8-litre engine choice, with a six-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission. The Wingroad will feature a continuously variable transmission with six-speed paddle-shift manual mode as standard, and it is expected that the Tiida will offer such a system in due course.

Both the engine and the Tiida's underpinnings are joint developments with French partners Renault and the result is a genuinely spacious car with outstanding front

and rear leg and headroom, with the sedan version offering a simply huge boot with 467 litres of volume. Strangely, the Tiida sedan is 100mm shorter than the outgoing Pulsar but it gains its volume by sitting on a 65mm longer wheelbase at 2600 mm. The Tiida hatch is slightly longer than the Pulsar hatch at 4205 mm. The Tiida's front seats which Nissan says are nearly as large as those in the Maxima's, have their height and recline levers mounted on the inner side of the squab to use up less cabin space.

Tiida and Wingroad Ti models allow their rear seats to slide backwards and forwards over a 240mm range, allowing several permutations of passenger and load space.

The range uses MacPherson struts up front with integral ripple control dampers and rebound springs front and rear to smooth out smaller vibrations and limit the strut's extension as body roll occurs

The Tiida and Wingroad sit on 15 inch wheels — alloy on Ti models, and all models feature fuel-saving variable speed sensitive electric power assisted steering. The cars use a front disc, rear drum ABS system with EBD (electronic brake force distribution) and BA (brake assist).

Tiida STs have twin airbags, ABS brakes front seat belt pretensioners, but only a lap belt in the centre rear seating position. The entry car also gets air-conditioning, central locking with keyless entry, tricot cloth upholstery, CD sound

system, power door mirrors and windows, variable intermittent wipers and a 60:40 split rear seat in the hatch.

The Wingroad ST-L wagon adds power-folding door mirrors, rear seat head restraints, leather steering wheel, sliding rear seat, front centre armrest with storage, luggage hooks, map lights, auto headlights on and intelligent key system.

The Ti models add curtain airbags, rear seat head restraints, leather steering wheel and smarter cloth upholstery, polished metallic interior trim and 15 inch alloy wheels. There are front and rear armrests, an overhead console with map lights. The sedan has a boot spoiler and 60:40 split folding rear seat, while the hatch has the sliding rear seat.

The Tiida sedan and hatch are on sale now from \$28,980 for the ST manual, \$30,380 for the ST automatic and \$32,450 for the Ti automatic. The Wingroad ST-L wagon arrives on April 1 at \$30,380.

On the road, the two Tiidas are poised, fine-riding cars, with good grip and well-contrived electric steering. The undulating wickedness of Taranaki, where the cars' launch was held, provided plenty of grounding problems for an accompanying Maxima, while the Tiidas all soaked things splendidly up with their long-legged and surprisingly refined gait.

The manual Tiida's cable six-speed manual transmission is a





noisy, clunky device which should admittedly improve in time, while the star is definitely the automatic and things should be even better when the car picks up the Wingroad wagon's CVT.

In terms of space, the Tiidas are huge. In the absence of the Civic five-door, the Nissan is easily the most capacious in the class, with the bustle-tailed sedan version offering a load-gobbling excuse for its square-tailed styling quirkiness.

Me, I preferred the look of the hatch, and not just because it's the one Ms Cattrall can be seen reclining upon.

However, the Wingroad wagon, which doesn't reach showrooms until April 1 looks likely to be the

real success story as it enters a market devoid of decent sub 2-litre wagons and with its specification levels and point-of-difference CVT transmission, the oddly named load carrier could be one of the sales sleepers of the year.

Meanwhile, Nissan has revitalised the way its Maxima looks and drives. The car has been given better on-road refinement and improved fuel economy courtesy of the Murano SUV's CVT transmission with a six-speed manual mode which replaces the four-speed conventional unit in the "old" 2005 Maxima. On a light throttle at 100kmh, the 170kW 333Nm 3.5-litre V6 engine whispers along at less than 2000rpm. It also responds with an uncanny smoothness when more

power and torque is needed and allows the car to expunge the rare failings of the original model, those of too few ratios and some related refinement issues.

Cosmetic changes as grille which has moved from cheese grated to integrated, it's a much more subtle look, along with new headlights, larger bumper mounted driving lights and a front bumper which does not extend like the big "chin" of the old model. At the rear there are new LED tail light clusters, more obvious dual exhaust pipes and the back bumper is more integrated with the rest of the rear of the car. Maxima pricing now starts with the Si at \$41,590. The ST at \$44,190 and the Ti for \$48,995 with leather in that model asking another \$3000.



Three-model range: the Tiida line-up includes a sedan (top left), the Wingroad wagon (top right) and the five-door hatch, which is the car Kim Cattrall is draped all over.



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Big Nissan: the Maxima is now better looking and more refined