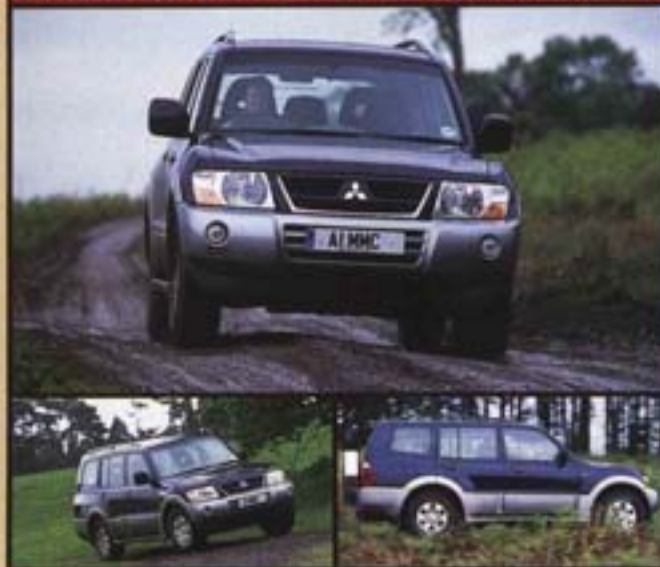




MITSUBISHI SHOGUN 3.5 V6 ELEGANCE AUTO 5-DR



The popularity of the Shogun is evidenced by the huge volume of personal-import Pajeros flooding Britain's roads, but on this occasion it wasn't able to excite us enough to put it near the top of the class. The latest version has good road presence and performance, and though it's short of ground clearance and axle articulation it's quite competent off road. There's also no doubting the engineering excellence that makes this one of the most reliable off-roaders around. The styling of the LWB version isn't coherent enough, the startling lines of the nose fading into a bland tail; similarly the bold dashboard is in contrast to the ordinary appearance of the cabin as a whole. It's a comfortable family car, with a pop-up extra bench seat in the rear, and the price is good considering the high spec.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£32,495
Engine cc/bhp:	3497/200
Transmission:	4-speed automatic, dual range, selectable 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	6
Refinement:	6
Off-road:	7
Value:	7
Style:	8
TOTAL:	34

WE LIKED: Futuristic dashboard
WE DISLIKED: Bland cabin

NISSAN PATROL 3.0S



Being one of the last of the dinosaur off-roaders the massive Nissan scores well off road, not so well on it. It would help if it had the engine power to match its size, but emissions regulations have whittled its power plant down to a 3.0-litre turbodiesel. The engine is a modern high-pressure direct injection type, capable of returning better than 26mpg in general driving, so if roomy seven-seater family accommodation is more important than pace and ride refinement, the Patrol is a very good value choice. The Nissan's primitive drivetrain of big chassis and coil-sprung beam axles, driven through a no-nonsense selectable 4WD system, gives it superb off-road ability, aided by great axle travel, especially with the rear anti-roll bar electronically disconnected, and the back axle diff lock engaged.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£24,000
Engine cc/bhp:	2953/156
Transmission:	5-speed manual, dual range, selectable 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	6
Refinement:	5
Off-road:	8
Value:	7
Style:	8
TOTAL:	34

WE LIKED: Off-road agility
WE DISLIKED: Weak engine torque

TOYOTA AMAZON 4.7 VX



If size was all that mattered the Amazon would win everything hands down, its enormous dimensions matched by suitably big engine power. Refinement, too, is excellent, and in spite of its size it is very easy to drive, leaning remarkably little in fast corners in spite of its bulk. Off road the Toyota isn't as good as it claims to be. A locking rear diff helps to keep it moving if a wheel lifts, which happens quite early if the terrain becomes lumpy, but it's just too big and unwieldy to cope with tight turns and narrow passages, and it sinks too easily into soft ground. On rough tracks its weight alone helps it ride comfortably, and permanent 4WD means it's always stable, even on loose surfaces. The biggest downfall is the softness of the styling, it's just too conservative.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£46,995
Engine cc/bhp:	4664/235
Transmission:	4-speed automatic, dual range, permanent 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	8
Refinement:	7
Off-road:	5
Value:	7
Style:	6
TOTAL:	33

WE LIKED: Big performance
WE DISLIKED: Bland styling