



Sweet Upgrades

New 2010 MODELS SPRING

Nissan Pathfinder



Lexus RX 350



for Families

By Don Armstrong

ONTO SUGAR LAND ROADS



Cadillac SRX



Lincoln MKT

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MB GLK-Class

With the economy trying to mend and pent-up demand for new vehicles on the rise, it's time for many families to start looking for a transportation replacement. In this edition of Sugar Land Magazine, we examine a sport utility vehicle (SUV) and two crossover utility vehicles (CUV) to help you decide which vehicle best fits your personality, style, and wallet.

SHARP LOOKING CADILLAC

One of the brightest stars in the "new" GM stable is the completely redesigned Cadillac SRX, a sharp looking, luxury CUV that combines the versatility of a body-on-frame SUV, handling characteristics of a sedan, and fuel mileage somewhere in between.

The SRX continues the edgy design that Cadillac debuted several years ago with the CTS sedan. The SRX sports an Escalade-type grille, giving it a more rugged appearance, keeping it out of the mom mobile category. Sacrificing a few cubic feet of interior cargo space, the sloping roofline gives the vehicle a go-fast look.

Powering the SRX is a 3.0-liter V6 that delivers a respectable 265 horsepower driving the front wheels through a six-speed automatic transmission. This combination is good for 18 miles per gallon city and 25 miles per gallon highway. An optional 2.8-liter turbocharged V-6 spins out 300 horsepower, but is available only in the all-wheel drive model and adds an additional \$15,485 to the bottom line. The Cadillac SRX competed against most of the challengers in the class at the recent Texas Auto Writers Truck Rodeo and was voted CUV of Texas. Pricing starts at \$33,330.

MORE BENZ FOR YOUR BUCK

The long overdue Mercedes Benz GLK-class is the new kid on the block in the all-important compact luxury crossover segment. This may be the second most affordable Mercedes offered, but you'd be hard pressed to find anybody, other than the salesperson, that would know it.

Known for its quality, Mercedes started the engineering exercise at ground level. The GLK is built on the C-Class platform; a solid chassis that carries the crossover mass like it was made specifically for the extra heft. The interior mirrors that of the C-Class as well, except for its truck-like, upright dash and seating for seven. When compared to others in the compact category, the GLK may come up a little short in interior space, legroom, and cargo capacity, but attention to detail is hard to match. Power comes from a 268 horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6 connected to a seven-speed

automatic that drives the rear wheels. That combo delivers 16 miles per gallon city and 22 miles per gallon highway. Full-time all-wheel drive is optional, as is a diesel. Affordable is not one of the words we usually associate with Mercedes-Benz, but with a base price of \$34,600, this is one serious contender.

LONG RUN OF SUCCESS

Old school still rules, at least when it comes to the Toyota 4Runner. This body on frame SUV continues to sell and for all the right reasons. The fifth generation model, all-new for 2010, brings 25 years of development with it. Whether you get the base SR5 model, mid-level Trail, or the loaded 4WD Limited, you are bound to enjoy every inch of it.

The new 4Runner is bigger than the outgoing model in every way, yet the body styling continues a gradual evolution without losing its rugged, off-road appeal. A growing Fort Bend family will appreciate its versatility as a weekday errand runner and weekend hunting, fishing, boating, and off-roading fun machine.

Although a four-cylinder engine is offered on the SR5, you'll want the 4.0-liter V-6 that delivers 270 horsepower to either the rear or all four wheels through a five-speed automatic transmission, returning 17 miles per gallon city and 23 miles per gallon highway. Despite Toyota's recent recalls, the 4Runner is still a solid contender in the SUV market and should be on the top of your test drive list when shopping for a new ride. The SR5 with V-6 starts at \$29,175.

MORE FAMILY FAVORITES

Nissan Pathfinder

This direct competitor to the 4Runner still offers a pricey V-8 option, which is great for towing, but gets only 14 miles per gallon. The entry-level V-6 starts at \$27,440, almost \$2,000 less than the Toyota. Shop, shop, shop.

Lincoln MKZ

A "Lincolnized" version of the Ford Flex boasts a twin turbocharged V-6 called EcoBoost that turns out a V-8-feeling 355 horsepower. In-your-face styling can be polarizing, while its \$44,200 base price may have you looking elsewhere.

Lexus RX 350

One of our longtime favorites, the newly redesigned RX remains one of our top picks. A plush interior, quiet ride, nibble handling, and overall quality continue to give this little Lexus a leg up on the competition. Begins at \$37,625. SLM

DON ARMSTRONG'S knowledge and life-long love affair with motorsports has earned him the reputation of being one of the area's most respected automotive journalists. He's a member of the Texas Auto Writer's Association.



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