

KERBSIDE ROAR

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# DARE TO TREAD

The humble SUV Pajero Sport moves over uncarpeted terrain like a skater over ice



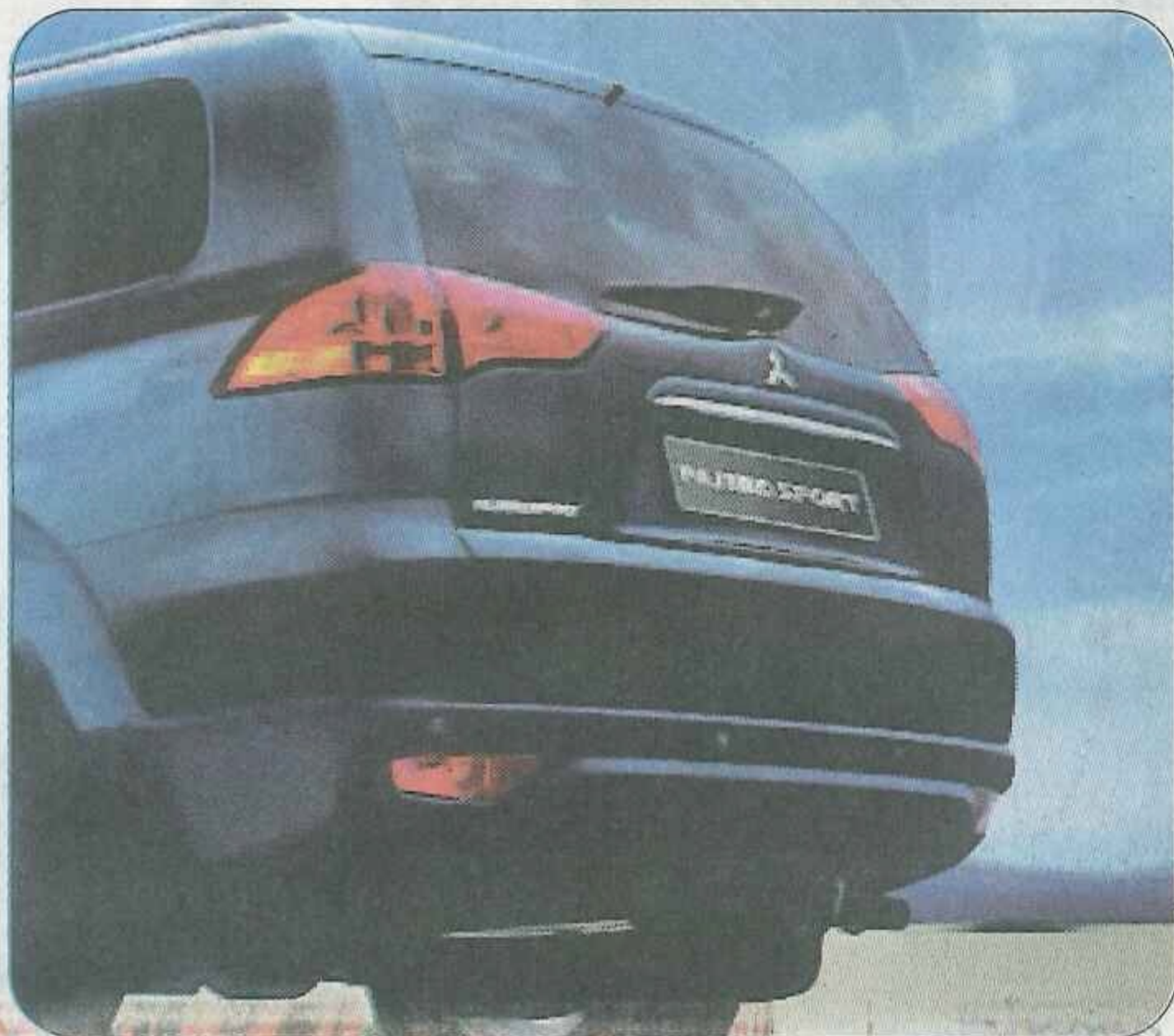
**T**AKE me to the hills, to the streams that pass between valleys, the desert and other places devoid of a road in this SUV. The humble Pajero Sport moves over uncarpeted terrain like a skater over ice. In the process it also makes a path for others to tread on: wherever it moves, it creates its own road.

A real SUV breed, the Pajero Sport is addictive: it keeps going, and going, and practically nothing can stop it barring the exception of diesel. Your heart opens up when you're at the driver's seat: which highway should I hit, which hill station should I visit? The SUV's nature is to keep searching for that wild trail.

The Japanese SUV sumo battle won't get closer than this: this Mitsubishi, at Rs 24 lakh, is the first real Fortuner rival in four years and it leaves the latter behind on many counts: firstly, it's steering doesn't shake at 160 kmph, the Rs 21 lakh Fortuner's does. Secondly, the Pajero's ride is more comfortable; especially the middle seats that provide huge knee room. Fall in to any pothole and the Pajero comes out of it as if a bad road never existed, the Fortuner has to be slowed to avoid jitters.

Thirdly, the Pajero's transmission is more interesting even though it has a smaller 2.4 litre diesel engine compared with the Fortuner's 3.0. Pajero doesn't cause any lack of interest in driving, even if you've done more than 100 kilometres in a day. The Fortuner sometimes feels like the Innova from the inside as both Toyotas' share identical cabins.

The Pajero Sport is a completely different SUV with non-resemblance to any other car from the Mitsubishi family.



It has a brand legacy that no one can ignore — lot of kids that have grown up with the Pajero SFX in their colony are now damn old. The Fortuner's brand legacy was intact since there was no clear archrival: the Endeavour was around for a lot of time but in the same guise, the Captiva is a five-seater and the CR-V is a no option running on petrol.

Pajero Sport looks glitzy with its cute but mean chrome front grille: you know it can do a lot more than it shows by the way it looks. It hides its mean traits when idle. Mitsubishi hasn't put an extra effort anywhere on the exterior of the car to glam it up, which works as a differentiation.

Its rear is also sleek to fit well and move across the narrow trails. Seeing the side profile of both the Pajero and Fortuner, you can hardly spot a difference. The Fortuner is showier with a hell lot of chrome from the rear, but too much badging and chroming makes it a little crowded. The Pajero's rear just shows you what you need: branding and



boot-open lid — at least there's something to appreciate about it engineering-wise as its more body and less ornaments.

Top-end Japanese full blown SUVs don't really give much mileage: 7 or 8 kmpl, unless you're in a petrol CR-V that surprises you with 9 kmpl. So it all boils down to the looks and capabilities: none of the SUVs

in this segment are luxurious no matter how humungous they seem.

In the higher bracket, it may be affected by the recently launched Rs 26 lakh Audi Q3 that's a luxury car brand's cheapest SUV but has got nothing made of luxury inside. The Q3's way smaller, can only seat five instead of seven people

that the Pajero seat. The Pajero's size is that of a Q7.

Pajero's got a really neat cabin: the multi-info display column in the middle shows all you need: fuel consumption, direction you're heading to and time. Apt compartments for bottles storage, a comprehensive music system with manoeuvre buttons on the steering wheel, door lamps on all doors so that you see where you place your foot while climbing this monster and a really, really comfortable third row of two seats.

The new Pajero Sport provides you a sense of completeness in an SUV. It doesn't really make you feel that there's anything missing. The way it goes about its path is really professional, no extra qualms to be hysterical about and that's the way it should be. So, are you ready with the map and the sunglasses? Lets get moving. ■

(Hindustan Motors provided the vehicle for review purposes)