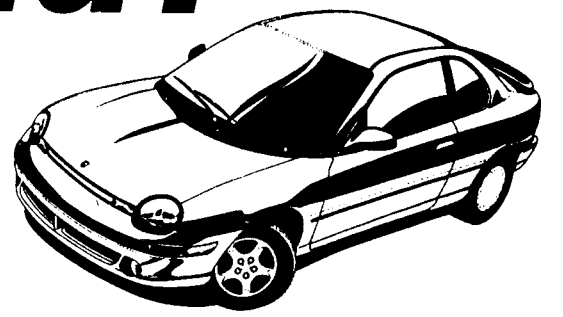


What's Driving Behrend?

• A MONTHLY SUPPLEMENT FEATURING NEW CARS, COMMUTER ISSUES, AND STUDENT STORIES AT PENN STATE ERIE, THE BEHREND COLLEGE. •

APRIL 2001



Test drive: Neil's 2001 Mitsubishi Eclipse

by Rob Wynne
auto page editor

Since Neil Makadia has been a good sport about taking pictures and travelling around town with me looking at cars, I promised a while back that a feature would be done about his new car, whatever it was going to be and whenever he bought it. Often times I would tell him he's going to be stuck with his Volvo until he is old and gray. That is no longer the case. After going for a spin in his new ride, I decided I was going to do some comparisons, as did Neil. Here's what we came up with.

At first glance the new 2001 Mitsubishi Eclipse lets you know that it means business. Its sleek as usual styling complements a respectable engine under the hood. And you can't beat the fun of having a sport-stick shifter for those moments when you feel like a Formula One racer. Aside from the slightly uncomfortable seats, I believe Mitsubishi has filled in a common gap between the wanna-be sport sedans (or coupes) like the Neon R/T and the slightly expensive high-end sports cars like the BMW Roadster and Porsche 911. At a reasonable sticker price of about \$18,000, there is a little taste of luxury as well as a dependable engine just waiting to be unleashed.

First off, I liked the smoothness of the Eclipse. I

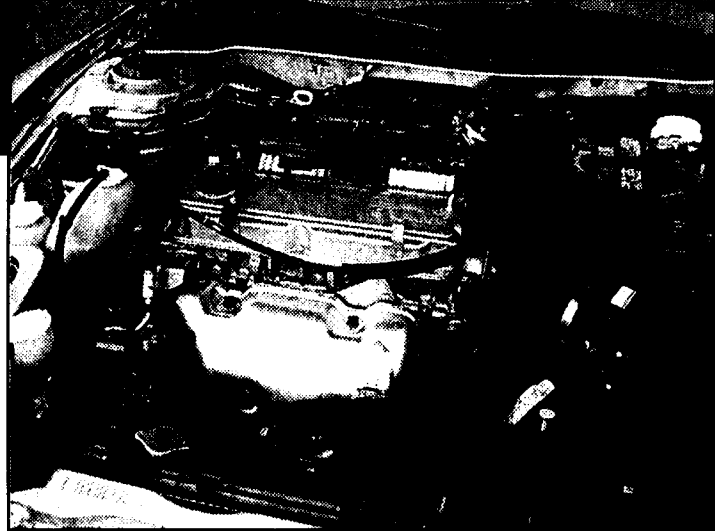
didn't notice too much road grain noise, something for which my Stratus doesn't compensate too well. I think my car scores higher in acceleration by just a bit, but it all balances out in the end. I have a DOHC engine, yet he has the sport-stick shifter. I didn't feel like racing on I-90 just so I could provide a solid answer, I'll just say it's close. There is also an optional 3.0 liter V-6 in the Spyder version, a design of a few years back that is still popular today.

While sitting in the cockpit-like control area, I seemed to have flashbacks of a 2000 Grand Am coupe that I once test drove. The dash display was similar, as was the amount of space allotted per individual. Adequate head room, but a little shy on leg room - still a decent amount if space if you have two other friends in the back. I'm just used to driving a sedan, that's all.

The option I liked best, however, is the power sunroof. It allows a person like myself to avoid breathing in all of that new car smell; plus when Erie has its three nice days of the year, I'm sure Neil will be well-prepared. The factory CD player was



PHOTOS BY ROB WYNNE



impressive.

It was quite capable of handling his dance party mixes.

In the end, I wouldn't mind having a car like the Eclipse someday; maybe I'll upgrade my

by Neil Makadia
photo editor

One of the most popular cars on the market today is the Mitsubishi Eclipse. The Eclipse comes in a V-6 engine and also in an I4. Many standard features come with the car. There are three main trims to the car: the RS, GS, and GT. The RS is the basic model. There are not too many power options in it. The GS, the next step up, seems to be the most popular model within the consumer market. The GS has the Sportronic clutchless transmission, power windows, locks, and mirrors.

An optional package that contains a better stereo and sunroof is also available. The GT is the high-end model with a V-6 engine in it and lots more options. The car offers the driver more flexibility with the Sportronic shift. It gives the car a better pickup to many of the other cars. The car is also similar to the Pontiac Grand Am. They both have similar power but the Eclipse looks sportier. The comfort level of the

car, however, is not as good as some of the other cars on the market. Take the Volvos, for example. Their comfort level is high, but the Eclipse is a \$20,000 car, whereas the Volvos cost around \$30,000.

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Subaru Impreza WRX: It's what's on the inside that counts

by Warren Brown
The Washington Post

It was ugly. People laughed at its bright-blue color and ridiculed the air scoop atop its aluminum hood. Its two-toned fabric seats, black and blue, became the butt of jokes. Its name, the Subaru Impreza WRX, was a laugh, too.

WRX. Why would a car company give a vehicle a name that sounds like "wrecks"?



Buyers who value function over form will see beauty in the 2002 Subaru Impreza WRX's hood scoop, its wider track and standard, 16-inch aluminum-alloy wheels.

It's all part of a plan.

You can get attention in the auto business by looking beautiful. You also can get it by being ugly with purpose.

Subaru is good at going the ugly route, as shown by models such as the 1979 Subaru DL sedan, with its overextended front bumper, and the 1988 Subaru XT6 coupe, a wedgy, linear thing with instrument-panel lighting reminiscent of a nightclub strip.

The company has experimented with mainstream styling, as represented by its Forester sport-utility wagon, in a successful attempt to broaden its sales base. But the 2002 Impreza WRX is a definite return to the P-Ugly (Purposefully Ugly) School of Marketing.

Subaru's executives call it something else: "Subaru Driving Performance Strategy." But the aim is the same - to exploit that small, lucrative segment of niche buyers who value function over form, performance over style. They are the hard-core insiders - the people automotive marketers call "enthusiasts." They see beauty in the Impreza WRX's hood scoop, because they know it feeds air to the intercooler of the car's

two-liter, four-cylinder, 227-horsepower, turbocharged engine.

That's a lot of kick for a compact car weighing 3,085 pounds. The enthusiasts know that, too. And they know that the Impreza WRX's wider track and standard, 16-inch aluminum-alloy wheels, shod with Bridgestone Potenza all-season radials, gives the car the balance and grip it needs to take curves with authority.

That is why enthusiasts greeted with approbation the same test car detractors treated with opprobrium. Enthusiasts wanted to know if I had a chance to "put it on the track," to drive it at top speed on a raceway. I had not. But Subaru will provide that opportunity for Impreza WRX buyers, who will be given a complimentary membership to the Sports Car Club of America, one of the biggest organizations sanctioning professional and amateur road racing, rally and autocross events in the United States.

The people who attend and participate in those events are the same people who mourned the recent death of stock-car racing great Dale Earnhardt. They look at a car covered with decals and big numbers and see glory. They look at the bright blue of the tested Impreza WRX, or the "blaze yellow" of some special WRX models, and see the same thing.

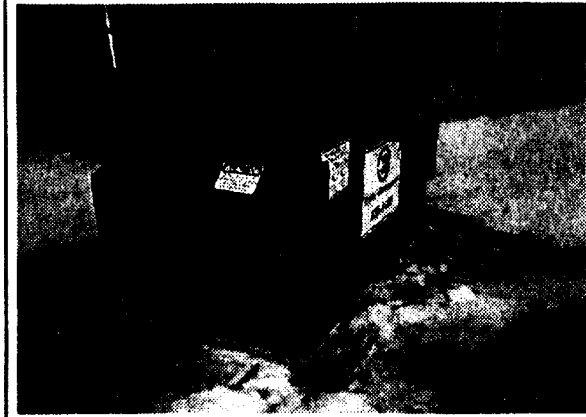
Subaru understands. The company knows that an orange numerical decal against that bright-blue body stands out on anybody's track. Ditto a black numerical decal against a blaze-yellow body. The thrill of watching one of those cars zip around the track on a Sunday afternoon is surpassed only by being in the driver's seat.

This, I had a chance to do - albeit in the comparatively mundane environments of Interstate 95 and the New Jersey Turnpike. The Impreza WRX's seats might be ugly. But wow! They hug the back and butt perfectly, working with the seat belts to keep you firmly in place during crash-avoidance maneuvers. That's in keeping with Subaru's policy of "active driving, active safety," and that's no laughing matter.

That name? This is the story. The 2002 Impreza WRX is based on Impreza models used in the demanding World Rally Championship races. Presumably, Subaru could have named the car the Impreza WRC. But that might have landed the company in a squabble with the racing organization. Also, it could have caused an identity crisis with Hyundai Motor Co., which is running a model overseas called the Hyundai Accent WRC2.

Automakers often use the letter "X" in sports cars and other high-performance vehicles. "X" implies speed and the technology to handle it, and no one who drives the WRX can argue with that.

Dumpster crossing...



Student's Toyota vs. the dumpster; the dumpster wins. Special thanks to Ainslie Ulmer, a senior at Behrend, for the great photos. When mom said, "Take out the garbage," she didn't think you'd become violent about it.

Auto Page • April 6, 2001 • Rob Wynne, Auto Page Editor

Do you have a unique or customized car that you want the rest of the campus to see?

Do you have a funny story about "what happened on the way to Behrend one morning?"

Are you a commuter who has to vent some steam before you blow a gasket?

Share your photos and stories with us! Due to limited space, not all submissions may appear on our page.

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Behrcoll5@aol.com

Learning to live: Keeping your car running

by Joanna M. Carman
staff writer

Think of your car as a pet. It needs to be fed, washed, and taken care of in order to go where you want it, and to last.

"One thing that is very important is to take the time to read the little book in your glove compartment," said Patricia Serratore, vice president of consumer affairs at the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence.

Serratore said those who own or lease a vehicle should look in its owner's manual at least once a year to check the vehicle's maintenance schedule.

She said each part on a vehicle has a "wear life" that is based on mileage, and car manufacturers list such information inside the manual.

"Things like the timing belt have a wear life, and if you don't get it changed it can break and leave you stranded," she said.

The owner's manual also can help a driver locate the different components of a vehicle, such as the oil dipstick. It may also list which types of fluids will work best with that particular vehicle, including which grade of gasoline will provide optimum performance.

According to information provided by the American Automobile Association, many drivers waste money pumping higher-grade gasoline. Most newer automobiles are designed to use a specific grade; increasing the octane will not make the vehicle's fuel economy result in more miles per gallon.

In addition to checking the maintenance schedule in the owner's manual, Serratore said students who are attending school away from their home towns should locate a repair shop near school before they need to use its services.

"You should know where to go before you need to go there," she said. "You should find a place where you feel comfortable taking your car before something serious goes wrong."

Serratore added that ASE offers high-level certification through standardized testing to technicians in the automotive industry. She said technicians who are certified through the national organization wear a blue seal on their uniforms, or have them posted in the shops.

"Look for the blue seal; it's one way to find a good repair shop," Serratore said.

The most important things students can do for their automobiles between maintenance jobs is to check the oil and tires. Engine oil should be changed approximately every 3,000 miles. It can be changed at about every 5,000 miles for automobiles that are not used as primary means of travel.

"If you miss one or two (oil changes) it's not a big deal," Serratore said, "but changing the oil ultimately extends the life of the engine. If it's never changed, the engine will eventually blow up." Also, if oil is not changed, it may break down and become sludgy, damaging the vehicle's overall performance.

Air pressure and tread on tires should be checked about every other time the gasoline tank is filled, according to Serratore.

She said students should take a walk around their car while the gas is pumping to check and see if the tires appear flat or low on air. Many gasoline stations have outside air pumps equipped with an air pressure gauge to test the pressure in the tires. Check the owner's manual for the proper amount of air pressure for each vehicle.

"A quick test for tread is to stick a penny in it," Serratore said. "If you can't see (Abraham) Lincoln's head the tread is good."

Students also should take the time to check all other fluids, such as transmission fluid, brake fluid, windshield-washing fluid, and antifreeze on a regular basis. Those who aren't sure what to look for may have their cars checked by an automotive technician while getting an oil change or other services.