

Double Eclipse

A partially familiar name, new blood and a hint of broader changes coming. By Joe Sage

The Mitsubishi lineup in the US was whittling down to two related crossovers (the 7-seat Outlander and smaller 5-seat Outlander Sport) and the little Mirage econocar (hatch or sedan). The Lancer compact sedan was discontinued in mid-2017 (though they will still sell you one and in fact will also still sell you a new 2015 Lancer Evolution, their discontinued legendary rally competitor).

When we first got wind of a new vehicle with Eclipse in its name, we envisioned the popular compact sport coupe discontinued after 2012—welcome back! But wait. This is not that. This is the Eclipse Cross, a new vehicle of a considerably different sort, but partly co-opting that name.

The Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross gets its name half from aiming to be a lively and sporty driver, serving somewhat the same customers as the sport coupe had, and half from being another crossover. Fair enough; the Lancer cancellation came with word that they would now concentrate on utilities.

The automotive landscape is in a period of size overlap right now: EPA categorizes vehicles by cabin volume and tests fuel economy by footprint, bringing us many a vehicle with, for example, a

midsize cabin in a subcompact category. By some ratings, even the three-row Outlander is a compact; but with seven seats, it competes in the full-size segment for most buyers.

Several brands have utilities with a sizing and naming pattern of two models in sequence, the smaller called Sport, then a third even smaller model with a different name: Hyundai Santa Fe, Santa Fe Sport and Tucson; Nissan Rogue, Rogue Sport and Kicks; Range Rover, Range Rover Sport and Evoque. Thus Mitsubishi may throw a few people off, as the new Eclipse Cross fits *between* Outlander and Outlander Sport, by every measure (features, specifications and pricing).

Mitsubishi—relatively small in North America, but huge globally—is having its footprint augmented by a recently announced partnership with already-partnered Nissan and Renault. The dividends of the new relationship include rapid expansions in product portfolio, engineering and technology. The Eclipse Cross may be seen as less a crowding of their crossover lineup than an overlay—the first fruits of a new family to arrive, while the existing models are nowhere near ready to go.



Mitsubishi utilities have been hot, bringing the brand to more than double its 2012 sales and on track to rise by 50 percent from 2016 to 2019. By market share, their biggest opening is in the smaller sizes, all the moreso if they combine value pricing with sportiness (as others in the crowded segment lean heavily toward luxury and family duty).

Much about the Eclipse Cross is transformative, while much else is evolutionary. The brand's "Dynamic Shield" front styling is more integrated, wrapping aerodynamically toward the sides, sweeping through a more athletic profile to a completely different twist in the rear, combining handy utility and sporty fastback elements. Lighting accents abound, from LEDs to crystal foglights. The handsome cabin has the most refined materials and finishes ever in a Mitsubishi, with gloss surfaces, silver accents and "carbon graining." Prices from model to model (see sidebar) step up very reasonably, successively adding advanced tech-



nology and features for this class—an advanced interface with high-mounted screen and console touchpad, Android/Apple links, heads-up display, panoramic sunroof, 710-watt Rockford Fosgate audio and more. Parental controls are also available: geofencing, speed alert and curfew alert.

The vehicle's underpinnings are equally distinctive. Eclipse Cross has a fuel-efficient new 1.5-liter turbo that beats the power and torque of a base Outlander Sport's 2.0L, approaches the power and exceeds the torque of the 2.4L and even has 85.5 percent the torque of Outlander's 3.0L V6. Significantly, the new engine's high torque kicks in low—2,000 rpm—and is sustained through a wide band.

An eight-step CVT with Sport Mode feeds another Eclipse Cross advantage—Mitsubishi's sophisticated S-AWC (Super All-Wheel Control), as available on the pricier Outlander but surpassing the simpler AWC of Outlander Sport. Torque vectoring both front-rear and left-right enhances traction and handling on all surfaces in all weather.

Our spirited launch drive through the twists and turns of the Santa Monica Mountains was in the top-trim SEL S-AWC Touring.

Aimed toward young professionals with active, sporty weekend leanings—especially those who may be new to the brand—the new Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross arrives by early March and is backed by a 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty and includes five years of roadside assistance. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	new 1.5L MIVEC direct-injection turbo
DRIVETRAIN	S-AWC Super All-Wheel Control AWD (or front-wheel-drive optional on ES model)
HP/TORQUE	152 hp / 184 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	CVT w 8-spd steps and Sport Mode (plus paddle shifters on SEL)
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, stblzr bar; R: multi-link w stblzr bar
STEERING	electric power steering
BRAKES	ABS w EBD and brake assist
WHEELS	(LE,SE,SEL) 18x7 alum alloy / (ES) 16x6.5 aa
TIRES	(LE,SE,SEL) P225/55 R18 / (ES) P215/70 R16
LENGTH / WB / TURN CIRC.	175.5 / 106.4 in / 34.8 ft
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.9 / 35.3 in
WEIGHT / TOW CAPACITY	3307 lb / 1500 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	regular unleaded / 15.8 gal
MPGtbd

BASE PRICE: ES 2wd.....**\$23,295**

ALL INCLUDE: heated power side mirrors, roof spoiler, color multi-info display, high-contrast meters, Bluetooth, steering wheel audio & phone controls, rear camera, cruise, auto climate, power locks & windows, anti-theft alarm.

ES S-AWC: lowest 4WD upgrade in segment.....**\$23,895**

LE S-AWC adds: black 18-in alloys, black exterior accents, 7-in thin display audio w Apple/Android.....**\$24,895**

SE S-AWC adds: blind spot warning, rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, heated front seats, keyless entry & start, electronic parking brake w/auto hold, Mitsubishi Connect w 2-year safeguard & remote services trial, 18-in two-tone alloy wheels, and silver, chrome, and gloss black exterior styling accents, hill hold**\$26,395**

SEL S-AWC adds: leather seats, heads-up display, multi-view camera system, LED headlights.....**\$27,895**

SEL S-AWC TOURING adds: dual-pane power sliding panoramic sunroof, 710w Rockford-Fosgate premium audio, advanced safety tech (forward collision mitigation, lane departure warning, adaptive cruise, auto high beams), heated steering wheel, heated rear seats**\$30,395**

New Red Diamond Premium Metallic paint is the first using a newly developed process creating high degrees of intensity, depth, richness and brightness.



MITSUBISHI CONNECT

Mitsubishi Connect—included in the Eclipse Cross SE and SEL—made its global debut at the LA Auto Show. During our launch drive two days later, we toured its features with product strategy senior manager Bryan Arnett. The system brings a suite of safeguard and remote services via subscription (2-year trial included), accessed through an Android or Apple app, online through a vehicle owners' portal, or from inside the vehicle.

The factory-installed Mitsubishi Connect system comprises an embedded telematics control unit with 4G LTE cellular modem and GPS capability via cellular.

The Safeguard services package within Mitsubishi Connect includes Automatic Collision Notification, SOS Emergency Assistance, Information Assistance, Roadside Assistance, Stolen Vehicle Assistance, Alarm Notification and Mileage Tracker.

A Remote services package adds Remote Climate Control, Remote Door Lock/Unlock, Remote Horn, Remote Lights, Car Finder, Vehicle Settings and Parental Controls (Geo Fence, Speed Alert and Curfew Alert).

Two in-vehicle buttons connect the vehicle to a call center for SOS Emergency Assistance, and Info/Roadside Assistance. ■

OUTLANDER PLUG-IN HYBRID



Mitsubishi is bringing the Outlander PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle)—which has already been the best-selling plug-in hybrid in Europe and Car of the Year in Japan over the past four years—to North America. The vehicle was on static display at our mid-day break during the Eclipse Cross launch drive (also providing on-board 120-volt output for our Mitsubishi Connect demonstration, above). The electrified SUV has a 2.0L gasoline engine, 12 kWh Li-Ion battery, and high-torque 60kW electric motors both front and rear, a high-efficiency layout combined with S-AWC all-wheel-drive to make it the only AWD plug-in hybrid in its class (and the only PHEV with DC fast charging, able to charge completely in 3.5 hours or to 80 percent in just 25 minutes. These numbers allow most commuters to run in pure electric all week, then tackle the great outdoors or the long haul on the weekend. Outlander PHEV started arriving here in December and has a starting price of \$34,595. ■