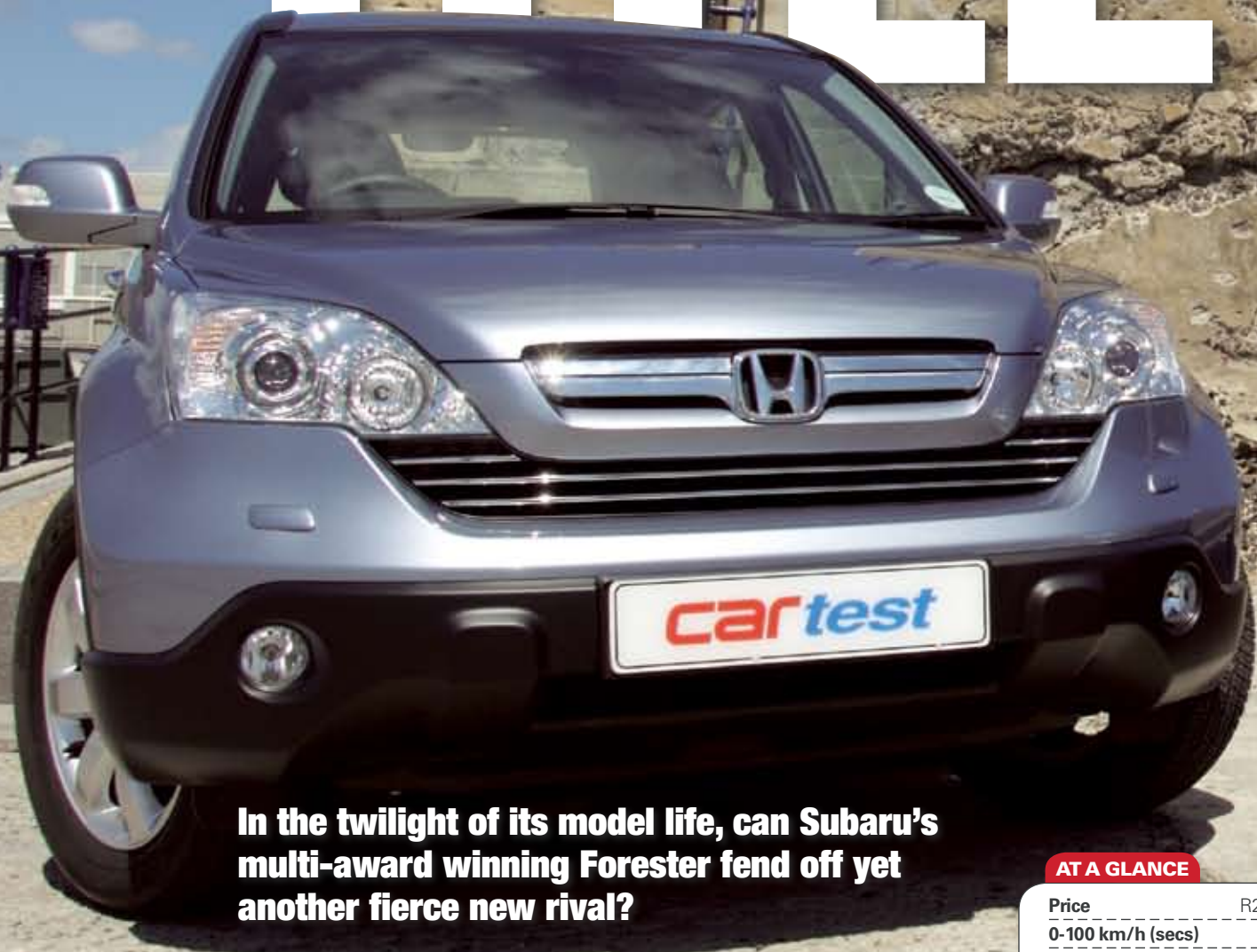


TITLE



In the twilight of its model life, can Subaru's multi-award winning Forester fend off yet another fierce new rival?

SUBARU's Forester has ruled as our Top 12 Best Buys Compact SUV champion for five years in succession. And every year it comes out tops in JD Power quality surveys all over the world. It is a fearsomely capable machine that combines quality and reliability with a fun driving experience, a comfortable cabin, reasonable economy, and the type of ride quality most luxury cars can only dream to offer. Plus, it is actually a vehicle that can stand its own ground when the going gets

rough – its permanent all-wheel drive system makes it an incredibly agile, stable and safe vehicle to drive on bad gravel roads, sand and on slippery surfaces. If you believe – as we do – that a proper compact SUV should be as good on-road as off, but not necessarily a rock hopper, then the Forester remains unbeaten.

But now another contender has arrived in the shape of Honda's brand-new CR-V. Can this newcomer finally put an end to the Forester's reign? Let's find out...

DESIGN AND PACKAGING

Honda CR-V 16/20
Subaru Forester 15/20

Originally launched in 2002 and facelifted in 2005, the Subaru Forester has never been a yuppie-favourite, simply because it looks rather, well... like a slightly high-riding station wagon, doesn't it? It also looks lower than most of its rivals, but this appearance is misleading, because the Forester offers very competitive front and

AT A GLANCE

Price	R299 500
0-100 km/h (secs)	10,68
100-0 km/h (secs)	3,15
Top speed (km/h)	182
Fuel index (ℓ/100 km)	9,96
Luggage (dm ³)	336-448/1 320
Airbags	6

rear headroom. And it is actually one of the highest-riding in this class, with an impressive ground clearance of 200 mm. Its underbody is also almost completely flat, which aids its ability to traverse rough terrain. The only factor counting against its use in

SUBARU FORESTER 2,5 XS PREMIUM

FIGHT



AT A GLANCE

Price	R295 000
0-100 km/h (secs)	9,81
100-0 km/h (secs)	3,47
Top speed (km/h)	188
Fuel index (ℓ/100 km)	10,95
Luggage (dm³)	344-1 264
Airbags	4

really tricky off-road situations are the large front and rear bumpers.

The Honda CR-V is a thoroughly modern design that has really polarised the CAR team. Some love its quirky styling and coupé-like side window-line, but others find the odd grille design (especially), and slightly

NOTEBOOK



The CR-V is an excellent cross-over, but the Forester is absolutely bullet-proof - JB



In the aftermath of World War Three, only cockroaches, Telkom and Subaru Foresters will survive - HO



As a mom's taxi, take the CR-V, but the Forester is the proper SUV - PP



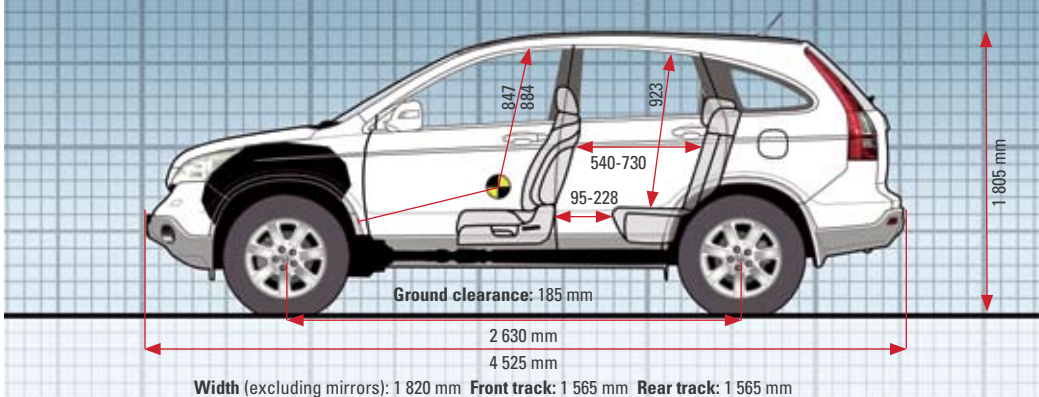
CR-V is arguably more car for the money, but I'd buy the purpose-built Scooby - SM



Honda will have broader appeal, but I'd buy the Forester: it's more manly - IM

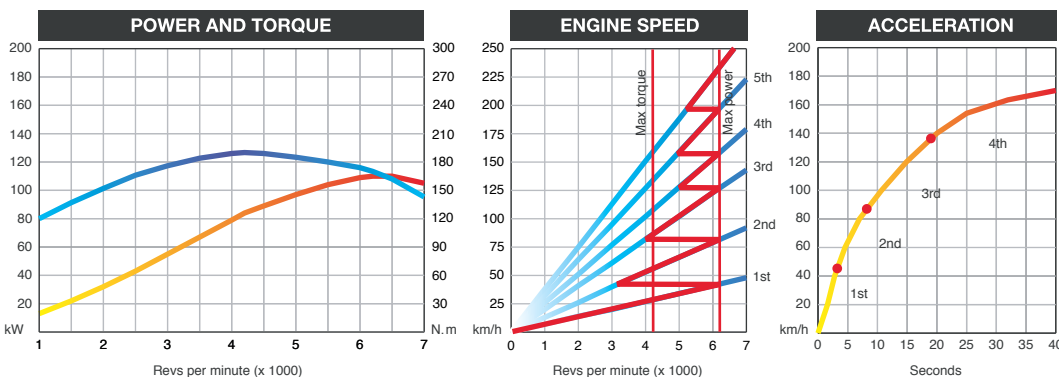
bloated rear view, off-putting. Nevertheless, the CR-V is far more likely to make the neighbours' window curtains twitch with jealousy than the Forester, as it appears to

Denotes hip point of 1,8 m adult



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:		3rd gear	1,212 to 1	STEERING:	
Cylinders	four in-line, transverse	4th gear	0,972 to 1	Type	rack and pinion, power-assisted
Fuel supply	electronic injection	5th gear	0,780 to 1	Lock to lock	3,0 turns
Bore/stroke	81/69,9 mm	Top gear	0,659 to 1	Turning circle	11,2 metres
Cubic capacity	1 997 cm ³	Reverse gear	3,583 to 1	SUSPENSION	
Compression ratio	10,5 to 1	Final drive	5,333 to 1	Front	MacPherson struts,
Valvegear	s-o-h-c, four valves per cylinder, i-VTEC	Drive wheels	two-four-wheel drive	Rear	toe-control link, stabiliser bar
ENGINE OUTPUT:		Driver aids	-		double wishbones,
Max power ISO (kW)	110	WHEELS AND TYRES:			reactive link, stabiliser bar
Power peak (r/min)	6 200	Road wheels	17x6,5J alloy	CAPACITIES:	
Red line (r/min)	6 700	Tyre make	Bridgestone Dueler H/T	Seating	5
Max torque (N.m)	190	Tyre size	225/65 R17	Fuel tank	58 litres
Torque peak (r/min)	4 200	Spare – type and location	full size, under boot floor	Boot/utility space	336-448/1 320 dm ³
TRANSMISSION:		BRAKES:		WARRANTY AND SERVICE INTERVALS:	
Forward speeds	six	Front	296 mm ventilated discs	3 years/100 000 km warranty	
Low gear	3,642 to 1	Rear	305 mm solid discs	5 years/100 000 km service plan	
2nd gear	1,880 to 1	Hydraulics	ABS, EBD	1 year roadside assistance	
				Service every 15 000 km	



TEST RESULTS

MAXIMUM SPEED (km/h):		FUEL CONSUMPTION:		INTERIOR NOISE LEVELS (dB, A-weighted):	
True speed	182 at 5 720 r/min in 5th gear	*Fuel index	9,96 litres/100 km	Idle	34
Speedometer reading	189		10,04 km/litre	120 km/h	67
(Average of runs both ways on a level road)		Estimated tank range	582 km	PERFORMANCE FACTORS:	
Calibration:	60 80 100 120	(*Calculated overall consumption)		Power/mass (W/kg)	70
True speed:	57 77 96 115	BRAKING TEST:		Power/litre (kW/litre)	55
Odometer error	0,25 per cent over	From 100 km/h		Torque/litre (N.m/litre)	95
ACCELERATION (seconds):		Best/worst stop	3,07/3,21	Frontal area (m ²)	3,77
0-60	4,54	Average of 10 stops/rating	3,15/poor	Drag coefficient (Cd)	n/a
0-80	6,97	(Measured in seconds with stops from true speeds at 30-second intervals on a good bitumenised surface.)		km/h per 1 000 r/min (top)	37,7
0-100	10,68	GEARED SPEEDS (km/h):		Revs/km	1 592
0-120	14,89	Low gear	42* 46	Mass as tested (kg)	1 580
1 km sprint	31,94	2nd gear	82* 88	Front/rear weight distribution (%)	55/45
Terminal speed	163,4 km/h	3rd gear	127* 137	(Calculated on "mass as tested", gross frontal area, gearing and ISO power output)	
OVERTAKING ACCELERATION (seconds):		4th gear	159* 171	TEST CONDITIONS:	
40-60	3,99 5,62 8,21 9,36	5th gear	197* 213	Altitude	at sea level
60-80	4,03 5,34 7,84 9,05	Top gear	234* 252	Weather	overcast, mild
80-100	4,13 5,93 8,02 10,36	(Calculated at engine power peak* – 6 200 r/min and at red line – 6 700 r/min.)		Test car's odometer	2 864
100-120	4,75 6,19 9,86 11,29				
120-140	– 7,56 10,58 13,02				

be the bigger, more expensive of the two. The CR-V is, in fact, longer, wider and higher, and also has a longer wheelbase, which gives it a more spacious cabin. It features a rear bench that can slide forwards or rearward by around 130 mm, allowing luggage space and rear legroom to be tailored to the user's needs. This means it has more usable rear legroom, and also a bigger boot (when the rear seats are moved forward). Total utility space is also slightly larger than in the Forester – 336-448/1 320 dm³ for the Honda, and 344/1 264 dm³ for the Subaru. Both vehicles have full-size spare wheels under their boot floors.

From behind the steering wheel, the Honda is clearly the more modern vehicle, with smart instrumentation incorporating a neat multi-function display (something sorely lacking in the Subaru). The Subaru's fascia, on the other hand, is ergonomically excellent, but urgently in need of some design flair.

Both Honda and Subaru have built reputations as makers of quality cars, so it came as no surprise to find that both our test vehicles appeared very solidly screwed together. Cheapish plastics are used here and there on both vehicles, but both also manage to disguise them well. Having run a Forester in our long-term fleet two years ago, we can also vouch for the durability of the Subaru's fittings.

COMFORT AND FEATURES

Honda CR-V 16/20
Subaru Forester 15/20

The Forester used for illustrative purposes on these pages is the lower-spec 2,5 XS model, but the mechanically identical, higher-spec Premium variant is used for comparison with the CR-V RVS*i*, seeing as they are priced within spitting distance of each other.

Both vehicles offer climate control, cruise control, electric windows and mirrors all round (folding on the CR-V), power steering, ABS with EBD, hill-hold, electric sunroof, remote central unlocking, and child seat anchors. The CR-V has curtain airbags (in addition to the dual front and side 'bags shared with the Forester), auto-on headlamps and wipers, remote audio controls on the steering wheel, and electric adjustment for the driver's seat (manual on the Forester). The Forester hits back with a 6-disc CD changer (single front loader on the

CR-V), self-levelling rear suspension, and a low-range transfer case – as many serious SUV enthusiasts will tell you, no SUV is complete without low-range.

So, spec-wise, there is not really that much to choose between the two – but look closer and the CR-V does offer some more modern packaging solutions – it has a double cubby, for example, and then there is also that previously mentioned sliding rear bench, as well as a neat folding boot board that can be used to split the load bay into two levels. The CR-V also has a large storage box between the seats.

But easily the CR-V's biggest advantage over the Forester is its extra – and variable – rear leg-room. By comparison, the Forester feels quite cramped at the rear, although there is ample foot space, and headroom is actually better than in the Honda.

RIDE, HANDLING AND BRAKING

Honda CR-V 15/20
Subaru Forester 17/20

Honda's new CR-V rides on a MacPherson strut front, and reactive link double wishbone rear suspension set-up. Anti-roll bars are fitted at both ends. The CR-V's wider track, standard 17-inch wheels and 35 mm lower centre of gravity are all efforts to make it handle less like an SUV, and more like a family saloon. For the most part, the effort has been worth it – new CR-V exhibits very little cornering body roll, and generally rides like a big station wagon. In fact, from behind the wheel, it actually feels like an MPV – which is probably what the market wants, seeing as so many of these vehicles are typically used for the school run...

The improved on-road handling, however, has arguably come at the cost of some gravel road ability. Besides the fact that the ride height is an unimpressive 185 mm, the stiffer suspension (compared with the Forester), make the Honda feel less comfortable on poor or gravel road surfaces.

By contrast with the Subaru's permanent all-wheel drive system, the CR-V has a "real time" four-wheel drive set-up that sees it running in front-wheel drive most of the time, with improved fuel economy claimed as a benefit. When the CR-V's system detects that the front wheels are losing grip, it immediately transfers torque to the rear wheels.

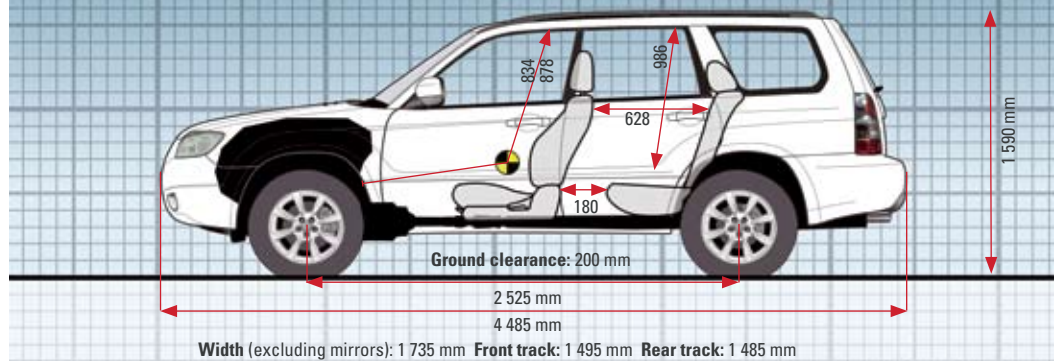
CAR April 2007

SUBARU FORESTER 2,5 XS PREMIUM

CAR TEST SCORE

16/20

Denotes hip point of 1,8 m adult



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:
Cylinders four, horizontally-opposed
Fuel supply multi-point, sequential injection
Bore/stroke 99,5/79 mm
Cubic capacity 2 457 cm³
Compression ratio 10 to 1
Valvegear s-o-h-c, four valves per cylinder

ENGINE OUTPUT:
Max power ISO (kW) 121
Power peak (r/min) 5 600
Red line (r/min) 6 200
Max torque (N.m) 225
Torque peak (r/min) 4 400

TRANSMISSION:
Forward speeds five
Low gear 3,454 to 1
2nd gear 2,062 to 1
3rd gear 1,448 to 1

4th gear 1,088 to 1
Top gear 0,780 to 1
Reverse gear 3,333 to 1
Final drive 4,111 to 1
Reduction gear 1,196 to 1
Drive wheels permanent all-wheel drive
Driver aids -

WHEELS AND TYRES:
Road wheels 16x6,5J alloy
Tyre make Yokohama Geolander G900
Tyre size 215/60 R16
Spare – type and location full size on steel, under boot board

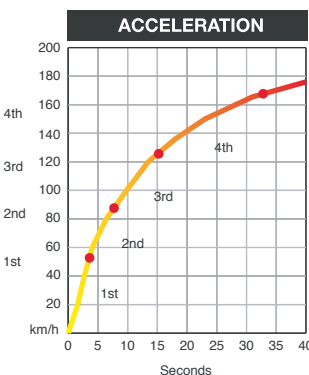
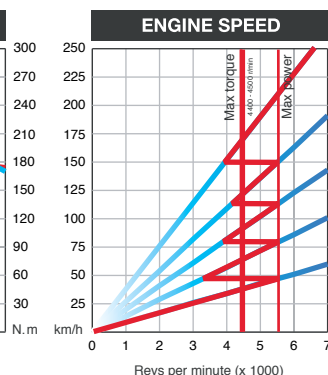
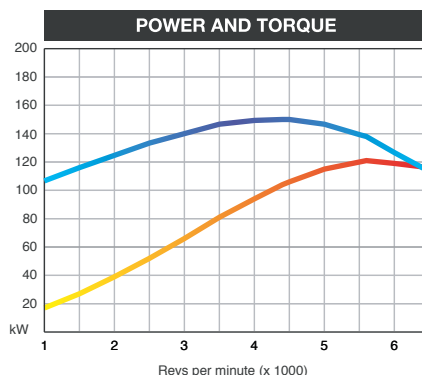
BRAKES:
Front 294 mm ventilated discs
Rear 266 mm solid discs
Hydraulics ABS, EBD

STEERING:
Type rack and pinion, power-assisted
Lock to lock 3,0 turns
Turning circle 10,6 metres

SUSPENSION
Front MacPherson struts
Rear multi-link

CAPACITIES:
Seating 5
Fuel tank 60 litres
Boot/utility space 344-1 264 dm³

WARRANTY AND SERVICE INTERVALS:
3 years/ 100 000 km warranty
3 years/63 000 km maintenance plan
Subaru Assist
Service every 12 500 km



TEST RESULTS

MAXIMUM SPEED (km/h):
True speed 188 at 4 950 r/min in top gear
Speedometer reading 202
(Average of runs both ways on a level road)
Calibration: 60 80 100 120
True speed: 55 75 93 111
Odometer error 1,64 per cent over over

ACCELERATION (seconds):
0-60 4,05
0-80 6,39
0-100 9,81
0-120 13,46
1 km sprint 30,94
Terminal speed 165,5 km/h

OVERTAKING ACCELERATION (seconds):

	3rd	4th	Top
40-60	3,55	5,38	9,43
60-80	3,41	5,14	8,83
80-100	3,57	5,18	9,59
100-120	4,10	5,53	10,49
120-140	-	6,60	14,25

FUEL CONSUMPTION:
*Fuel index 10,95 litres/100 km
9,13 km/litre
Estimated tank range 548 km
(*Calculated overall consumption)

BRAKING TEST:
From 100 km/h
Best/worst stop 3,34/3,56
Average of 10 stops/rating 3,47/poor
(Measured in seconds with stops from true speeds at 30-second intervals on a good bitumenised surface.)

GEARED SPEEDS (km/h):
Low gear 48* 53
2nd gear 81* 89
3rd gear 115* 127
4th gear 153* 169
Top gear 213* 236
(Calculated at engine power peak* – 5 600 r/min and at red line – 6 200 r/min.)

INTERIOR NOISE LEVELS (dB, A-weighted):
Idle 42
120 km/h 70

PERFORMANCE FACTORS:
Power/mass (W/kg) 84
Power/litre (kW/litre) 49
Torque/litre (N.m/litre) 92
Frontal area (m²) 2,76
Drag coefficient (Cd) n/a
km/h per 1 000 r/min (top) 38,0
Revs/km 1 578
Mass as tested (kg) 1 445
Front/rear weight distribution (%) 57/43
(Calculated on "mass as tested", gross frontal area, gearing and ISO power output)

TEST CONDITIONS:
Altitude at sea level
Weather mild, windy
Test car's odometer 865



SUBARU FORESTER



HONDA CR-V



CR-V has the more modern, feature-filled fascia, whereas the Forester's is more straightforward. Both cars' interiors have plenty of shiny plastic, but are well screwed together.

Compared with its predecessor, up to 20 per cent more torque is moved to the rear. We still found it rather amusing when, during performance testing, the CR-V spun its front wheels like a hot hatch possessed...

By comparison, the Forester is the more "proper" SUV. It rides on a modified Impreza platform, with MacPherson struts in front and a multi-link set-up at the rear. The all-wheel drive system divides torque equally between the two axles under normal driving conditions, but a central viscous differential will send drive to the axle with more grip, if the other is slipping. This gives the Forester tremendous grip and stability even under normal road conditions, and imparts a feeling of confidence to the driver that few vehicles in this segment can match. With its more direct steering (the CR-V's electric power steering feels a bit over-assisted), the Forester is the vehicle that "connects" with its driver - we are sure the driving enthusiast will always go the Forester route.

But, arguably, the Forester's greatest talent is that you don't need to be a rally wannabe to enjoy its dynamic talents, because it boasts such superb ride quality, and awe-inspiring dirt road capability. To put it simply, it treats road imperfections and rutted gravel roads with disdain. And when the going gets

trickier, and the speeds lower, there is always the higher ground clearance, permanent all-wheel drive, and low-range 'box to get you out of trouble. For the buyer who will actually use his/her vehicle for recreational purposes off the beaten track, the Forester is the clear winner.

Both vehicles achieved braking times that fall into the "poor" rating parameters of our strict emergency brake testing routine. However, their stopping times (3,15 sec for the CR-V, and 3,47 for the Forester) are about on par for this type of vehicle. The times were also achieved consistently, and without fade.

PERFORMANCE

Honda CR-V	13/20
Subaru Forester	16/20

The CR-V is powered by a new s-o-h-c, 2,0-litre i-VTEC version of the 1,8-litre engine found in the Civic. It delivers 110 kW at 6 200 r/min and 190 N.m of torque at 4 200. A six-speed manual gearbox is fitted. Weighing just under 1,6 tons as tested, the CR-V's power/weight ratio of 70 W/kg is nothing to write home about. But to be fair, its 0-100-km/h time of 10,68 seconds and 182 km/h top speed is perfectly fine for this type of vehicle... until you drive the Forester.

The Scooby is powered by a 2,5-litre flat-four pumping out 121 kW at 5 600 r/min and 225 N.m

at 4 400. The extra oomph, slightly lower weight, and better traction make the Forester a fair bit quicker off the mark. Our test unit had less than 800 km on the odo when we did our performance testing, yet clocked a 0-100 km/h best of 9,81 seconds and a 188 km/h top speed. Previous Foresters (with more kays) have been even faster. The overtaking acceleration times appear slightly confusing, because the Forester has one gear less but, generally speaking, it pulls more strongly than the CR-V.

From behind the wheel, this translates into the Forester feeling more responsive to throttle inputs, and it is more flexible in third and fourth, so there's less need to stir the gearbox. With the six-speed Honda it is more regularly required to change down a gear or two to get the necessary momentum.

FUEL ECONOMY

Honda CR-V	17/20
Subaru Forester	14/20

With its larger capacity engine, the Forester was never going to match the economy of the Honda's advanced i-VTEC unit. The CR-V achieved a calculated fuel index figure of 9,96 litres/100 km, translating to range of 582 km on the 58-litre tank. The Subaru's fuel index figure is 10,95 litres/100 km, which gives it a range of 548 km.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Honda CR-V	16/20
Subaru Forester	14/20

With its longer service plan (5 years/100 000 km), the R299 500 CR-V is immediately off to a good start in this category. It is also the more economical, and because of wider market acceptance of the Honda badge, is also likely to have a better resale value.

The R295 000 Forester has a 3 years/63 000 km service plan, which can be extended at extra cost. Neither of these vehicles should give their owners much grief in terms of reliability, and both manufacturers have excellent reputations for after-sales service. Although the Forester is the most popular model in the Subaru line-up, and the make's best performer in terms of resale value too, it is still unlikely to match the Honda CR-V in this regard.

VERDICT

Honda CR-V	16/20
Subaru Forester	16/20

So, the Honda CR-V is more economical, offers more space in a more cleverly packaged cabin, and is likely to be the wiser investment, come trade-in time. Does that make it our new compact SUV champion? Not quite...

Although we've given the same score to both, these are very different vehicles. Which one is best for you will depend entirely on how you intend using it. The Honda's strengths make it a brilliant (if slightly underpowered) family car. In fact, most of CAR's testers see it as crossover that, probably in line with how buyers are actually using vehicles in this segment, verges more towards the MPV camp.

By contrast, the Forester sticks far more rigorously to the original definition of a compact SUV. What the Subaru does better than any other vehicle in the so-called SUV segment is its ability to show that superb dirt- and rough-road ability do not need to come at the expense of brilliant on-road dynamics. This is a car that you'll enjoy driving, whatever the conditions. We recognise the brilliant Honda as the car the market wants, but, for us, the Subaru still defines the term *compact Sport-Utility Vehicle*.