Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2008 Jeep Liberty Sport 4X4

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The Jeep Liberty is all-new for 2008. For 2008, Jeep is giving the Liberty an all-new look inside and out. It's slightly bigger and has a smoother ride, but respectfully maintains the rugged Jeep heritage. The 2008 Liberty is quite capable off road, one of the best in its class.

With heavily revised styling, the 2008 Liberty is taller and more angular, reminiscent of the muchloved, rugged but crude 1990s Jeep Cherokee. The all-new 2008 Liberty is more of a true Jeep, with off-road prowess and bold, upright styling.

The 2008 Jeep Liberty is offered in two trim levels - Sport and Limited, both with front- or four-wheel drive. Sport models come standard with a six-speed manual transmission; a four-Sport and standard on Limited.

that allows use of four-wheel in quick changes of direction. drive on dry pavement. Both systems have low-range gearing.

istic seven-slot grille, which is taller on this model. The front air dam is removable to provide more

ground clearance for off-roading. A notable feature of the rear is the lack of an exterior spare tire. Jeep has moved it under the floor for 2008. The tailgate also changes from a swing gate to a liftgate design, and separate opening rear glass is newly stan-

The only engine for 2008 is a carryover 3.7-liter, 210-horsepower V-6; a little slow getting up to cruising speed but has no trouble passing once it's there. At 15 m.p.g. city/21 m.p.g. highway, fuel economy is modest for a small SUV.

When they redesigned it, Jeep engineers set out to give the 2008 Liberty pleasant road manners and, when it comes to ride qualspeed automatic is optional for ity, they succeeded. The Liberty rides firmly, but irons out most The base four-wheel-drive bumps quite well and is stable on system is Jeep's Command Trac, the highway. The Liberty sacria part-time system designed for fices handling for off-road prowoff-road use. Also offered is ess, however. The Liberty leans Selec-Trac II, a full-time system in turns and has a floppy feeling

Inside, the Liberty has plenty of room for five. Though not luxu-The most noticeable aspect of rious, the new interior of the 2008 the front end is Jeep's character- Liberty is functional. Most driv-



The All-New Rough and Rugged Liberty

Specifications: 3.7-Liter 210-hp @ 235 lb-ft. torque V-6 engine; 4-Speed automatic transmission; 15-City 21-Highway MPG; \$ 23,575. MSRP

is plentiful.

The side mirrors are large and

ers will like the high seating posi- don't think the interior feels like other accessories. tion. Head room in the front seat an upgrade from the previous generation, however.

the cabin has a lot of glass, mak- Liberty's second row seats fold gauges are easy to spot and the seat, to provide plenty of room controls are simple to use. We for hauling boxes, bikes and life's

Sadly, the test vehicle didn't come with the Sky Slider roof Cargo room is a plus. The option, a sheet of canvas over front and back seats for open-air ing for fine rear visibility. The flat, as does the front passenger motoring -- over front or rear seats or both -- at the push of a button. Sport options include Class III

ity of 5000 pounds, rugged off-road capability and plenty of cargo space, the 2008 Jeep Liberty is a good choice for small families or couples that tow boats or go camping. If your travels don't often take you off-road, the other small SUVs will deliver better fuel economy and better handling, but none will offer

a more pleasant ride.

With a maximum towing capac-

towing package with trailer sway control; the Premium Sound Group with 6-disc CD changer, six speakers and Sirius satellite radio with one-year subscription; all-terrain tires; skid plates for the 4x4 model; and the Popular Equipment Group with 115-volt auxiliary power outlet, six speakers, cargo compartment cover, fog lamps, front passenger fold-flat seat, roof rails, cruise control, external temperature display and compass.

Safety features include dual front airbags, plus head-protecting sidecurtain airbags with rollover sensors and front side airbags for torso protection. Active safety features include anti-lock brakes with brake assist, hill start assist, traction control, and electronic stability control with rollover mitigation. The antilock brakes have rough road detection; when rough conditions are detected, the system holds the brake pulses longer to better slow the vehicle.

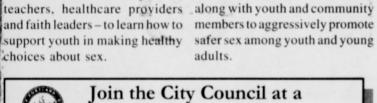
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