

Bye-bye, bubble car

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TEST DRIVE

Quiet, Please

2017 Buick LaCrosse Premium AWD

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

LaCrosse is redesigned for 2017. The third generation of Buick's full-size sedan is longer, lower, wider and lighter than the previous model, and handsomely styled. Premium (MSRP: \$41,990) is the headliner of a four-model range which starts with LaCrosse (\$32,990), followed by Preferred (\$36,990) and Essence (\$39,590). With four option packages (plus a \$395 paint upcharge), my loaded LaCrosse Premium AWD had an as-tested price of \$50,270.

A single drivetrain powers all models. The 3.6L V-6 delivers 310 horsepower @ 6,800 rpm, and 282 lb. ft. of torque @ 5,200 rpm. The direct injection six moves the big (3,840 lb. in AWD trim) Buick down the road swiftly (high 6-second range from 0-60 mph); cruising smoothly at

2017 Buick LaCrosse Premium AWD
MSRP: \$32,065 (base) · As tested: \$50,270

highway speeds. The power flows easily and the engine responds with a subtle little growl when you lean into it. Fuel economy is improved over last year's model. The EPA says that a FWD LaCrosse will return 21 mpg city/31 highway (that compares with 18/28 in 2016). Choosing AWD exacts a mild, mileage penalty. All-



BUICK'S LACROSSE full-size, upscale sedan returns longer, wider and more handsome than the previous model. All four trim levels are powered by a 3.6L V-6 with 310 horsepower. Premium models offer an all-wheel-drive option.

wheelers rate 20/29 (vs. 17/26 last year).

The eight-speed transmission shifts efficiently in full automatic mode. It can also be shifted "manually" via steering wheel-mounted paddles, which are (surprisingly) fitted to all LaCrosse models. Surprising, in that this feature is generally reserved for sporty cars, not luxury leaning models like LaCrosse.

The transmission isn't a dual clutch design, and the lag between gear request and transmission response in manual mode quickly dampens the fun factor in manual shifting. However the paddles come in handy if you want to hold lower cogs longer before shifting. The engine has a stop-start system, and unlike most cars so equipped, it can't be disabled — an annoyance.

All four trim ranges are front-wheel-drive. Premium

models are also offered with all-wheel-drive (for an extra \$2,200). Those looking for maximum handling will want to try an FWD model with the Dynamic Drive Package (\$1,625). It includes performance front struts with continuous damping control, sport mode selectivity and 20-inch wheels/tires.

Opting for the all-wheel-drive system in Premium models (which is a dual clutch design) requires that you forego the front suspension upgrade in favor of a conventional MacPherson strut with coil-over-spring setup. Either way, the rear suspension is a five-link design. The absence of the sportier suspension on AWD cars will likely not be missed by the majority of LaCrosse buyers, who figure to be more interested in the car's upscale ride comfort than they are in corner carving.

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