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TEST DRIVE

Mainstream Midsize

2018 Chevy Malibu Premier

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Slotted between Impala and Cruze, Malibu is Chevy's offering in the midsize sedan segment. Two years removed from a full redesign, the ninth generation Malibu carries over into 2018 with few changes.

Most notable for the new model year is the addition of a Redline Edition. Offered on LT models, it includes 19-inch aluminum rims with red hash marks, and a blackout look for grille, rearview mirrors, bowtie emblems and nameplate. A new hue also hits the charts this year. Sandy Ridge Metallic brings the total color choices to 10.

Malibu is once again offered in L, LS, LT and Premier trim levels (a Hybrid version is also available). A 1.5L turbocharged, four-cylinder engine is combined with a six-speed automatic transmission on L, LS and LT models. The 1.5 four makes

2018 Chevy Malibu Premier
MSRP: \$22,555 · As Tested: \$36,370

163 horsepower, 184 lb.-ft. of torque and returns an EPA estimated 27 miles per gallon city 36 highway, 30 combined. Premier level cars like my tester upgrade to a 2.0L turbo four, linked to a nine-speed automatic transmission. The power bump over the base four is substantial; 2.0L Malibu's generate 250 horsepower and 260 lb.-ft. of torque. That's +87 and +76, respec-



THE 2018 MALIBU is Chevrolet's offering in the midsize sedan segment, slotted between Impala and Cruze. It's powered by a turbocharged 1.5L four-cylinder or, in the Premium level trim, a 2.0L four (left).

tively, compared to the base motor.

Fuel economy estimates for the 2.0 turbo are 22/33/26. The Premier's four feels lively under foot, with the added power spaced out nicely by the nine-speed transmission. Off the dime (0-60 mph in under 6 seconds) and highway response are on point. Hybrid models package a 1.8L four-cylinder gas engine with an electric motor for 182 horsepower and 277 lb.-ft. of torque. They are the Mileage Meisters of the Malibu line, with EPA estimates of 49/43/46.

In keeping with the car's target market, Malibu's suspension is biased towards the ride side of the ride/handling continuum. Steering effort is comfortably

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boosted so turning effort is low. While the Chevy corners confidently and feels stable, road feel through the steering wheel is relatively numb. Road bumps are soaked up nicely. Malibu's four-wheel disc brake system feels smooth and stout.

Malibu's dash is characterized by a clean control layout. HVAC switchgear is collected in a pad midway up the center stack. It's straight forward, easy to reach and minimally distracting. Chevrolet's MyLink infotainment system is standard on LS trims and up. It's accessed via 7-inch color, capacitive touchscreen (standard on LS and LT trim) or an 8-inch display with navigation (standard on Premiere, optional on LT and Hybrid). The MyLink system interface is better than average in terms of user friendliness.

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