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TEST DRIVE

Tech Injection

2018 Acura MDX AWD Advance

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Fresh off of a refresh last year, MDX — Acura's premium, three-row crossover — returns for 2018 with infotainment upgrades and new color choices.

The company's flagship crossover is offered in front- and all-wheel-drive versions. Prices start at \$44,200 for a base trim model with FWD. Three option packages are available: Technology, Entertainment and Advance. My test drive MDX had all three, plus AWD, and stickered for \$57,645. A gas/electric Sport Hybrid model is also available (starting price \$52,100).



Most newsworthy in the changes to the revamped, dual-screen interface is the fact that the system is now compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay — a plus for smartphone users. The company claims that touchscreen response time is 30 percent faster than previously. I can't verify the

2018 Acura MDX AWD Advance
MSRP: \$56,650 · As Tested: \$57,645

speed difference, but I can confirm that — being a capacitive touchscreen — it's unresponsive to input from a winter gloved hand (unless said gloves have conductive threads in the pad of the fingers that do the touching). Here as elsewhere in the Acura lineup, one of the interior highlights is the available, ELS Studio Premium Audio system. That's "ELS" as in Elliot Scheiner. The renowned studio sound engineer/producer lends his input to the design of these Acura sound systems, which, as here, are typically very ear-worthy.



THE 2018 MDX is Acura's flagship, three-row crossover, and is available with both front- and all-wheel-drive systems. The 3.5-liter V-6 is rated at 290 horsepower and 267 lb.-ft. of torque, with a towing capacity of 5,000 lbs.

The instrument cluster is bright and legible. The electronic shifter interface is laid out in a line on the console, with the buttons at varying heights. It seems to have been designed to be different for different's sake, as there's no apparent advantage to this layout.

Premium vehicles have many features and part of the challenge for interior designers is to organize the many controls in a way that makes sense and looks good. MDX switchgear is about average in terms of user friendliness. Controls for HVAC, for example, are split between center stack buttons and the touchscreen, so you need to make multiple moves to get the desired result.

MDX has three-row seating. The rearmost row is most suited to kids, owing to its limited leg room and knees-

up floor height. Adding the Advance Package gives you the option of swapping the three-across split bench in the second row for a pair of captain's chairs (heated).

These seats have almost six inches of adjustable travel, and the package also includes a pair of sun shades for the row two windows, as well as a pair of extra USB ports for the rearmost row and the highly useful Surround View Camera system. Both second-row seat choices are adult-sized. The captain's chairs are more luxurious; the standard

seats fold to a flat, gap-free load floor. Cargo capacity ranges from 15-68 cubic feet, depending on how the seats are configured. That compares with 18-56 in the Lexus RX350, 19-86 in the Volvo XC90 and 36-77 in the

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The Acura MDX's AWD system also pays dividends on dry pavement.

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