


So you want to buy a classic car?

Here's what what you'll need... besides money.

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Yes, you can afford a Benz.

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Kia to update its Soul.

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Car show calendar returns for 2018

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TEST DRIVE

Trims Thinned

2018 Mazda3 Four-Door Grand Touring

DAN LYONS | text

Special to the Times Union

Second only to the CX-5 in Mazda domestic sales, the Mazda3 is the company's entry in the compact sedan/hatchback segment. It carries over with minor changes for 2018.

Offered in sedan or hatchback body styles, the front-wheel-drive "3" is available in three trim levels for the former: Sport (MSRP: \$19,145), Touring (\$21,140) and Grand Touring (\$24,195). Hatchbacks have one more door than the sedans (five), and one less trim level (three) than they did last year. Gone is the Touring 2.5 level; remaining are: Sport (\$20,395), Touring (\$21,890) and Grand Touring (\$24,945)

My four-door Grand Touring sedan had a sticker price of \$28,370. The largest of the extras was the Premium Equipment Package (\$1,600) which adds a navigation system, paddle shifters, articulating headlights, adaptive cruise control, traffic sign recog-



THE 2018 MAZDA3 compact is available in four-door (sedan) or five-door (hatchback) versions, with minor changes from the previous year's model. Grand Touring trim models are powered by a 2.5L, 184-hp four-cylinder.

@ 3,250 r.p.m. Fuel economy estimates on the 2.5L are 27/36/30. One former option with a minor, MPG impact has been discontinued for 2018. The i-ELOOP package (\$800) was a regenerative engine braking system that employed active grille shutters and a variable voltage alternator, in the interest of modest (1-2 mpg) mileage gains.

If you drive both engines, you're likely to gravitate towards the larger of the two. The 2.5L four is respectably quick. There's enough power on tap to suit the weight of the vehicle, support the car's sporty personality, and return solid mileage numbers.

The six-speed automatic transmission in my test car shifted smoothly and can be used in manumatic mode, with paddle shifters included in the Premium

Equipment Package. They're useful to hold the car in gear, keeping the revs up, during spirited driving. But, it's not a dual clutch transmission, so the lag between paddle shift request and transmission response dampens the fun factor.

The color of my test car was Snowflake White Pearl. This was appropriate for my early March test drive. In a recent Capital District survey, this was the month voted Most Likely to Overstay its Welcome. And even if my survey suffered from a small sample size (myself, my dog), I stand by the findings. One of the series of

nor'easters we enjoyed this year barreled through this test drive week. While all-wheel-drive will always offer the best grip in such circumstances, it's not widely found in compact class cars. AWD availability in the

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2018 Mazda3 Four-Door Grand Touring
MSRP: \$24,195 · As Tested: \$28,370



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