



Drive like Bond

Yes, you can buy a brand new '64 Aston Martin DB5, ejector seat and all.

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Raising the Roof

2018 Mazda6 Signature

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Mazda raises the roof on its midsize model line for 2018, adding two new top trim levels. The range-topping Signature and Grand Touring Reserve models cap a five-tier lineup that also includes Sport, Touring and Grand Touring. Prices range from \$21,950-\$34,750.

Mazda vehicles generally park on the sporty side of the street. If a stick shift is part of how you define that experience, the first stop in the trim walk is where you step off. Base, Sport models are the only 6 series cars that offer a manual transmission model. The entry level Mazda6 has some desirable standard features — like LED head and taillights, blind spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert and automatic brake control/ collision warning. But options are largely doled out according to trim level, and there are no packages available for Sport level cars.



2018 Mazda6 Signature
MSRP: \$34,750 · As tested: \$36,140

So you have to choose between a stick with limited features, or go automatic if you want access to anything beyond this.

The other end of the option rainbow is where we landed this week. The roster of standard equipment on the Signature level Mazda6 includes (among other things) a turbocharged engine, leather, wood and synthetic suede trim for seats and dash, 360-degree view monitor, Bose CenterPoint surround sound system, lane departure warning and lane keep assist. The cabin has an upscale look and feel.

The top two trim levels get a color, programmable, head-up display, projected on the windshield (above the new, 7-inch digital instrument panel). A central control knob and surrounding buttons provide access to the infotainment system, with redundant controls for some features on the steering wheel. The 8-inch display screen also functions as a touch screen, but only when the vehicle is stationary.

The system is a little better than average in terms of getting to and adjusting whatever you're looking for. The system is not as yet compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay; a minus for smartphone users. Also



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

THE 2018 MAZDA6 is the maker's sporty midsize, and even the entry level model offers desirable options. But if you like sporty and loaded, the Signature trim level won't force you to choose between a stick and an extended option sheet.

of note is that a CD player is no longer available. This is something of a surprise, as the midsize sedan market casts a wide net for buyers, and quite a few of them are old enough to still have some CDs that they enjoy listening to.

If that deletion makes for less music, at least there's less noise. Part of the 2018 refresh included sound abatement efforts, and the interior is a generally quiet space.

Seats are redesigned this year and suitably comfy. Ventilated seats are now standard on Grand Touring Reserve and Signature. Heated seats are cut and dried: You press a button and the seats either get warm or they don't. Ventilated seats are a different matter. Often, this feature amounts to nothing more than seat noise and vaguely strange sensations when you

The bottom line is a fun to drive car that's now easier to drive fast around corners.

press the button. So with the bar set low as to expectations, I'm happy to report that there's actually a sense of cooling that occurs here.

Six-footers can fit in back with like-size folks in front. Rear seat-backs fold forward to allow long items to be carried in the trunk, but you need to open the trunk to access the lever. Cargo capacity in this generation of Mazda6 is down from the previous editions (14.7 cu. ft., formerly 16.6), which is smaller than perennial segment benchmarks like Accord (16.7) and Camry (15.1). Interior stowage spots are numerous, but small in size.

Most cars in this segment have a base, four-cylinder engine and an optional, larger (often six-cylinder)

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