

So long, side view

Will side view mirrors soon be in the rear view?

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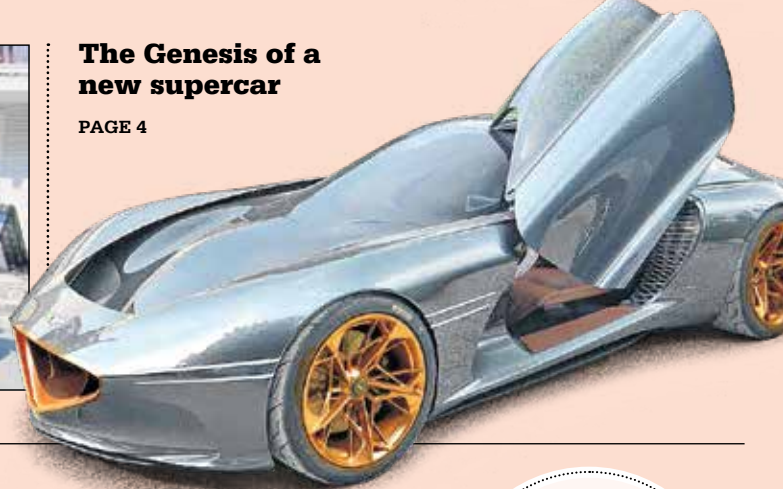
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TEST DRIVE

Tacking Duel

2018 Honda Clarity Plug-In Touring

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Honda has seen the future, and it has a plug. The company predicts that fully two thirds of all Honda's global auto sales by the year 2030 will be electrified vehicles.

The latest evidence of their commitment to this technology is this week's test drive — the Clarity plug-in hybrid. The addition of the PHEV rounds the Clarity model line from duo to trio. The new plug-in hybrid joins fuel cell (FCV) and electric (HEV) versions, which rolled out in 2017. Both of those debuts were lower profile, as the vehicles play to smaller markets. Clarity Fuel Cell is an electric car that draws its power from compressed hydrogen. While it has an estimated range of 366 miles on a five-minute refill, the infrastructure for hydrogen fueling stations is spotty, and the car is only offered



in California (and only by lease). Clarity Electric is a pure HEV, with plug powered recharges and an 89-mile range. It too is offered on a lease basis, limited to California and Oregon.

Clarity plug-in is, by comparison, the most mainstream of the trio. Beyond the fact that it's the only Clarity that you can buy here (and buy, not lease), it's



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UNLIKE THE ALL-ELECTRIC or hydrogen fuel cell versions, the Honda Clarity is a plug-in electric hybrid (PHEV). Along with two electric motors and battery, it also has an internal combustion engine so it can run on electric or gas.

also the only one that's fitted with an internal combustion engine, so it can run on electricity or gasoline. Clarity PHEV uses two electric motors to provide propulsion and energy generation. In this design, the gas engine works with the starter/generator to create electrical energy to charge the battery packs, which in turn power the AC drive motor, supplying the propulsion. Electrical energy for the batteries is also sourced from plug-in charging (120 or 240v) and regenerative braking.

On regular house current, recharging takes about 12 hours. With a 240 volt connection, the time is shaved to 2½ hours. A full battery pack allows you to drive in EV mode for up to 48 miles. That's enough range for many people to make their daily com-

mute without touching the gas supply. For longer trips, once the battery power is tapped out, the gas engine kicks in, supplying power to the batteries via the generator, to power the AC drive motor.

The torque-heavy pull from the electric motor gives the car a responsive feel right off the line.

Collectively, the powertrain generates 212 horsepower and 232 lb.-ft. of torque. The trip from 0 to 60 takes about eight seconds. That's neither fast nor slow. The torque-heavy pull from the electric motor gives the car a responsive feel off the line, and — especially in Sport mode — the Clarity comfortably comes up to highway speeds. Whenever the gas engine chimes in, it does so at a steady state speed, which translates as a droning noise. However, the cabin is fairly quiet, so while the sound is noticeable it's not objectionable. The Clarity carries

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2018 Honda Clarity Plug-In Touring
MSRP: \$33,400 (base), \$36,600 (Touring)
\$37,490 (As tested)



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