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TEST DRIVE

Nissan's Newest 2019 Nissan Kicks SR CVT

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

Last week, we drove Armada — the largest of Nissan's fleet (so to speak) of crossovers and SUVs. By Nissan's reckoning, the vehicle we review this week is on the opposite end of that class. Introduced last year, Kicks — Nissan's newest model — replaces Juke as the company's entry level crossover.



To me, a crossover is a mix of station wagon and SUV, with all-wheel-drive (at least optionally). Kicks is a front-wheel-drive only, four-door hatchback, so it's a stretch to consider it a crossover. But, I get the marketing intent. Crossovers are a hot selling segment.

That said, the obvious comparison for Kicks is Juke — the model it replaced in the Nissan lineup. Juke is summarily remembered for being small, stylistically challenged and fun to drive. Size-wise, Kicks is 6.7 inches longer, .2 inch narrower, and .6 inch taller

2019 Nissan Kicks SR CVT
MSRP: \$18,540 - \$20,870

than Juke. It's also about 300 lb. lighter, and rides on a wheelbase that's stretched 3.5 inches longer. Kicks is also a lot easier on the eyes, which can't hurt, from a sales perspective.

Inside, the newest Nissan is bigger in every dimension than the car it replaces: head room, leg room, front and back. Bigger, of course, doesn't mean big, as Kicks is still a subcompact class vehicle.

Typically, I use myself as a yardstick for comparison (OK, technically, a double yardstick), so readers will know what kind of room is left in back if a six-footer is in front. Factor in your height and that of the people you travel with, and you get a basic feel for how you'll fit in the vehicle.

In the case of Kicks, the front seats hold six-footers, and with those seats so set, there's kid-size room left in back. Kicks is considerably more considerate of cargo than was Juke. The sawed-off tail of the latter limited cargo capacity to 10.5 cubic feet behind the back seats, expandable to 35.9 cubic feet with said seats folded.

In Kicks, those storage space numbers are 25.3 - 53.1 cubic feet. Bigger than Juke, to be sure, and class competitive, though their utility is limited by split rear



NISSAN KICKS is the replacement for the outgoing Juke. The entry level four-door hatchback fits into the crossover segment, even though it's only available in front-wheel-drive. Power comes from a 122-hp, 1.6L four-cylinder engine.

seatbacks that don't fold fully flat — and won't fully fold, unless you move the front seats up. The resulting space is similarly not flat, as the folding seatbacks create a split-level cargo bay floor.

The front cabin design is simple and to the point. A bank of two dials and a handful of buttons located midway up the center stack control HVAC functions. They're easy to use and minimally distracting. Above is a 7-inch touchscreen and surrounding buttons that handle audio and vehicle system settings (the screen doesn't accept input from a winter gloved hand). The abundance of hard plastics in the interior is a reminder of Kick's entry class status. Stitched, vinyl covering is added to some sections on

upper trims, but the only truly soft touch surface area encountered is on the fold-down, right side arm rest for the driver. Your left elbow may file a complaint, as the elbow space scalloped out of the door panel isn't as cushy. Your passenger's left elbow may join the complaint, as there's no inside arm rest on that side. There are no complaints from any body parts about the front seats themselves, as they're comfortable, adjustable and reasonably supportive.

Juke and Kicks are decidedly different drivers. Small, agile, and with available AWD, Juke was a very lively ride, with a point and shoot, skateboard kind of feel. Its turbocharged,

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