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TEST DRIVE

The New Normal

2019 Honda Insight 4DR Touring

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

I don't know when I last had an Insight. That statement will come as no surprise to readers of this column, or anyone who knows me, for that matter. And sadly, the fact that I was speaking about the Honda Insight will do nothing to change those opinions. So, I'll plunge forward with this review, while embracing my shallowness.



Honda is predicting that, by 2030, fully two-thirds of their global lineup will be electrified vehicles. Which is not to say that their power source will be strictly electric. Hybrids that combine both gas and electric power will likely dominate this landscape.

They're already mainstream members of the current car market. Honda fields no less than five "environmental" cars in their 2019 lineup, including one fuel cell, one electric and a trio of hybrids (one plug-in and a pair of "plugless" models). The two sans-plug sedans are

2019 Honda Insight 4DR Touring

MSRP: \$22,830 (LX), \$28,090 (Touring)
\$28,985 (as tested)

the Accord Hybrid (subject of a future review) and the Honda Insight, which is our test car this week.

As found in Insight, Honda's third-generation, two-motor hybrid system combines a 1.5L, four-cylinder Atkinson cycle gas engine with an electric-drive motor, for a combined power output of 151 horsepower and 197 lb.-ft. of torque. Taking about eight seconds to reach 60 from a standstill, Insight is neither quick nor slow. It seems faster at low speeds, owing to the bottom



THE 2019 HONDA INSIGHT is propelled by a hybrid system of electric-drive motor and 1.5L, four-cylinder Atkinson cycle gas-powered engine (left). EPA mpg estimates are 51/45/48, though real-world figures may vary.

end oomph of the electric drive motor (max torque available from 0-3,000 rpm). Sport mode (one of three driving modes, along with Econ and Normal) sharpens throttle

response (and draws more from the torque-heavy EV source), so the car feels more responsive.

In 'round town maneuvers, Insight travels quietly and smoothly. At speeds under 20 mph, the vehicle can go about a mile on strictly electric power. Pressing the EV button sets the bias to electric-only power, albeit briefly. At highway speeds, it's a very quiet cabin. And while it's louder inside any time the gas engine chimes in, that sound is amplified by comparison with the golf cart silence of EV

In 'round town maneuvers, Insight travels quietly and smoothly.

mode travel. Noise really isn't an issue except when you stick your foot deep into the throttle and hold it there. At that point, engine drone is quite noticeable.

Fuel economy is frequently a highlight in hybrids, and the EPA says that you can expect the Insight to return 51/45/48. My tester underperformed the estimates, registering 37 miles per gallon, in a week's worth of driving.

Paddles located on the left and right side of the steering wheel are normally paddle shifters. Here, they're deceleration shifters, which you can use (if you choose) to adjust the level of regenerative braking. From paddles to pedals: Brake pedals in hybrids are sometimes spongy. Insight feels firm by comparison, giving no clues to the multitasking job description of the binders. Insight

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