

New tech puts Malibu at the top of the class

From pg. 1

- IntelliBeam automatic high beam
- Adaptive Cruise with Automatic Braking
- Automatic Parking Assist
- Teen Driver monitoring and control
- MyLink Android Auto/Apple CarPlay

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

The new Malibu starts with a lighter, stronger platform, stretching the wheelbase by 91 mm (3.6 in) and the overall length by 58 mm (2.8 in), benefitting both ride smoothness and interior room. Despite the size increase, a diet of high-strength steel and a stringent weight-reduction program has slashed the Malibu's mass by 136 kg (300 lb).

Even with the slight upsize nudge, the midsize Malibu slots neatly into the Chevrolet lineup between the smaller Cruze (starting at \$15,995) and big brother Impala (starting at \$29,395), with Malibu model choices ranging from L (\$21,745), LS (\$24,245), LT (\$25,245) and Premier (\$32,045), along with a new Hybrid version (\$28,850).

We start our ride experience with an LT tester, resplendent in Crystal Red Tintcoat, its upper-level trim features building on a solid content level that starts with 10 airbags, standard rearview camera, air conditioning, a full suite of steering wheel controls, 6-speaker audio and more.

Under the hood, the Malibu debuts a new standard turbocharged



An all-new interior sets the right tone with a rich mix of textures and just the right amount of contrasting highlights. A longer menu of driver assists and infotainment technologies are available.

1.5-litre Ecotec four-cylinder with VVT and stop/start technology. Fuel economy is rated at 8.7/6.3L/100m (city/hwy) and my mixed bag of driving averaged out to 8.4L/100km (comb).

That acceptable level of fuel efficiency doesn't come at the cost of power, although the 1.5-litre's 166 hp might raise a few eyebrows at first, especially considering the 195 hp rating of the previous generation 2.5-litre engine.

But the more important grunt of peak torque, at 184 lb/ft, is almost the same, an acceptable trade-off considering the new mill's smaller and lighters dimensions, contributing significantly to the Malibu's

overall weight loss.

And the new, smaller turbocharged engine certainly doesn't feel sluggish, with linear front-wheel-drive acceleration through the six-speed automatic blending nicely into a smooth cruising package.

For those looking for more oomph output, the Premier trim level substitutes a bigger 2.0-litre turbocharged unit making 250 hp and 266 lb/ft of torque, channeled through a new eight-speed automatic and offering only a mild fuel economy penalty at 10.6/7.1L/100km (city/hwy).

But my second test drive within the Malibu lineup looked at a dif-

ferent mix of power and performance - the 2016 Malibu Hybrid.

Our hybrid tester came in a somewhat more restrained and less fortunately named shade of Butte Red. Under the skin lie more significant differences.

The Malibu Hybrid is based on the content level of the LT; so starting equipment levels are similar to our first tester.

But a new direct-injected 1.8-litre engine is mated to a two-motor electric drive unit, harnessing components from the Chevy Volt and combining for an overall 182 hp and 277 lb/ft of torque.

I noted that the Malibu LT was smooth but the hybrid feels even

smoother with near-seamless power shifts between the gasoline engine and electric drive systems.

An 80-cell, 1.5kWh lithium-ion battery pack allows occasional EV-only running up to 85 km/h and plenty of torque assist from a standstill. That pack wedges in the trunk behind the back seat.

There's still room aplenty for overnight bags but cargo space is reduced to 328 litres, compared to 477 litres in a regular Malibu. And, of course the batteries and extra components add back all the weight pared from the new model (about 150 kg), sort of like having your fat Aunt Freida permanently ensconced in the back pew.

On the plus side, Chevrolet's first application of Exhaust Gas Heat Recovery, along with Exhaust Gas Recirculation, the regenerative braking system also taken from the Volt, and the included start/stop system combine with inherent hybrid strengths for a thrifty fuel economy rating of 5.0/5.1L/100km (city/hwy).

I always take hybrid systems as a personal challenge so I drove with the proverbial wineglass under the gas pedal and managed to beat the official rating with a real world average of 4.7L/100km (comb).

Bean counters will always parrot that hybrids aren't fuel efficient enough to make up for the price difference, and even GM's estimates, based on 20,000 km per year, reckon a \$1,112 annual fuel cost for the hybrid compared to \$1,657 for our first LT tester.

Continued on pg. 5

SUPER LUBE  **FRAM**
REAL DURABLE OIL.

RUST CHECK FALL SPECIAL

with this coupon when you BOOK your appointment!

RUST CHECK **SAVE \$10**

FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBER

5 ARMSTRONG AVE, GEORGETOWN MON-FRI: 8-6 SAT: 8-4
905.877.9394 www.superlubequakerstate.com

WE DO ALL AUTOMOTIVE MAINTENANCE

QUICK AUTO REPAIR

 **CAA Approved Vehicle Repair Facility**

Serving Halton Hills & Georgetown Since 1985

ASK ABOUT OUR MONTHLY SPECIALS

KROWN 354 Guelph St. Unit 21, Georgetown
905-877-8220
bstephens@quikautokrown.com