

WHEELS

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2010 Mazda6 has got 'the chops'

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Beauty may catch the eye but to win the role in any audition, you've gotta have "the chops", in this case, the room, the performance, the comfort and capabilities to carry off the multi-tasking demands of a family sedan audience.

Enter the 2010 Mazda6. In 2007, a second generation Mazda6 lineup was unveiled complete with sedan, wagon and hatchback versions. There was no problem with looks, style and sportiness. No problem with performance. But maybe a problem with oversized Americans trying to squeeze into them.

The hatchback and wagon versions, although popular in Canada, never took off in the U.S. either, and slaves that we are to American size demands and sales percentages, the decision was made to build a larger, more powerful, sedan-only Mazda6 specifically for North America.

Which is why a new 2009 Mazda6 debuted last year as an excellent compromise, somehow holding on to Mazda's "Zoom-zoom" styling and sport performance philosophy while offering more power, more room and more amenities.

When the car was launched, Don Romano, president of Mazda Canada said that "with the introduction of the new Mazda6, we are poised to capture an even larger share of intermediate sedan buyers."

"And with its dramatic design, driving dynamics, quality and value, the new Mazda6 is a fresh alternative to the bland offerings in this segment from other Japanese and North American brands," he added.



ABOVE: The 2010 Mazda6 GT-V6, a top-of-the line model of Mazda's flagship sedan lineup, combining exceptional driving dynamics along with intermediate sedans space and utility, and last year's winner of AJAC's "Best New Family Car (\$22k-\$30k) category.

Right: This latest Mazda6 GT-V6 is roomier and more spacious than its predecessors and reflects its upscale trim level with a full suite of technologies and standard equipment bolstered by an optional navigational system.



That's a pretty cocky attitude but, like its first generation predecessor, the 2009 Mazda6 took the award as "Best New Family Car (\$22k-\$30k) at the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada's (AJAC) Car of the Year competition. More importantly, it proved a successful follow-up to the popular Mazda3 lineup.

For the 2010 model year, the Mazda6 flagship sedan carries on with

little change save for some colour palette tinkering, more technological content and more all-inclusive packaging.

The 2010 Mazda6 is offered in two trim levels - the base GS and top-of-the-line GT.

And when I say "base" be aware that the Mazda6 starts with a very inclusive list of standard features that include 17-inch alloy wheels, a tire

pressure monitoring system (TPMS), four-wheel ABS disc brakes with electronic brake force distribution, traction control, six air bags, anti-theft alarm system with engine-immobilizer, power windows, air conditioning with micron air filter, tilt/telescopic steering with cruise control and audio switches, 60/40 split-fold rear seat and a six-speaker AM/FM/CD/MP3 audio system.

The GT trim level adds just about everything available in the option packages - things like dynamic stability control (DSC), an 8-way power adjustable driver's seat with lumbar support, moonroof, rain-sensing wipers, automatic headlights and more.

Both trim levels come with two engine choices - a 170 hp, 2.5-litre four-cylinder or a 272 hp, 3.7-litre V6. Both DOHC engines feature variable valve timing (VVT) and they are significantly more powerful than their predecessors.

On four-cylinder models, a six-speed manual comes standard. A five-speed automatic is optional. The V6 models come only with a six-speed automatic.

My tester was a fully-loaded Mazda6 GT-V6. This baby came loaded with all the goodies - Xenon HID headlights with manual leveling adjustment, smart keyless entry system and push button ignition, Blind Spot Monitoring System (BSM), BOSE 10-speaker surround sound, satellite navigation and Bluetooth with Audio Profile and SIRIUS satellite radio compatibility.

And, as expected at this top-of-the-line level of power and performance, the Mazda6 GT-V6 hauls up to speed nicely.

The V6 makes 272 hp @ 6250 rpm and 269 lb/ft of torque, more than enough muscle to move this Mazda6 from 0-100km in just over six seconds. Fuel economy is rated at 12.1/8L/100km.

Mazda's traditional emphasis on dynamic driving performance and a full suite of traction technologies give the car a nimble, planted feel with excellent cornering abilities despite the

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