

Hatchling

Hyundai ups their game significantly in this hot segment

BY JOE SAGE

Elantra is responsible for 27 percent of Hyundai sales in the US—where Elantra just had its fifth consecutive year with sales of over 200,000 units. Of about five million Elantras sold in 190 countries to date, about three million were in the US. (Hyundai Motor Company turned 50 this year, and Hyundai Motor America turned 30 last year.)

As more buyers flock to smaller vehicles, the lineup has continued to grow. The sixth generation Elantra launched in 2015 as a 2016 model, with an Elantra Eco added that spring—with a smaller turbo engine and dual clutch transmission, much the same pattern as Sonata—and an Elantra Sport by year's end, with more aggressive body details, a bigger turbo, and choice of DCT or 7-speed manual. Last in that series was a five-door body variant for 2017 known as the Elantra GT.

Now joining the Elantra family is an all-new car, a US version of the heavily Euro-influenced global Hyundai i30 (a larger sibling to the i20 World Rally Championship car), joining the American lineup as the Elantra GT. Hyundai used an earlier i30 as the basis for an American model from 2007-2012, the Elantra Touring small wagon. A variety of other i30 variants are marketed worldwide. Since the prior generation, the Elantra sedan for the US market is

built at Hyundai's plant in Alabama; the new GT hatchback is built at their Ulsan, South Korea plant.

There is now a spike in popularity for the compact hatch—Hyundai identifies seven hot current competitors—which offers much of the desired utility of small SUVs and crossovers in a more nimble form factor. Hyundai Santa Fe and Tucson utilities are also experiencing double-digit growth, and Hyundai's new Elantra GT hits all these nails squarely on the head in one new vehicle.

The profile for a compact hatch buyer is higher in education, income, professional career and physical activities than that of compact car, entry crossover or subcompact utility buyers. It also skews a little younger and a bit more male. These buyers are also less interested in price or special deals (though still interested in value) and more interested in the fun-to-drive quotient.

Two flavors of this new hatch both carry the sporty Elantra GT name, with the Elantra GT Sport the sportier of the two. Both are highly featured (see specifications sidebar) and highly styled—penned by world renowned automotive designer Peter Schreyer—with LED lighting standard or optional, a new signature cascading grille design, functional air curtains in the front fascia, a rear spoiler, and available split dual outlet exhaust. The GT Sport ups wheel size from 17- to 18-inch, adds red stitching and red bezels in the interior, and includes several additional convenience, driver assist and comfort features, such as dual zone automatic climate control. Style and tech pack-

ages on the GT add desirable features such as a panoramic sunroof, Infinity premium audio and ventilated seats. A sport tech package for the GT Sport adds more driver assist features, Infinity audio and power seats.

Most fundamentally, the GT Sport moves from the base two-liter four to a 1.6L turbo, for about a 24 percent bump in horsepower and torque. Both are available with a six-speed manual transmission; the GT is also available with a six-speed automatic, while the GT Sport's alternative is a seven-speed dual clutch transmission. Brakes and suspension are also upgraded on the GT Sport, which adds independent multi-link and a 15mm stabilizer bar in the rear, sport-tuned dampers and steering, and higher spring rates front and rear.

Elantra GT's packaging creates a car with about two and a half more cubic feet of cargo volume behind the front seats than VW Golf, on a wheelbase just half an inch longer. Its interior volume ranges from about nine to over eleven cubic feet more than four other key competing cars and from about four to almost nineteen more cubic feet compared to five competing small crossovers.

Connected tech includes Hyundai BlueLink available via Apple/Android smartphone, wearables and smart speakers from Amazon and Google, allowing remote start for cooling or for defrosting windows and mirrors in winter.

A full range of driver assist technologies beats competitors and includes such advanced features as smart cruise with stop/start capability and a



suite of driver attention alerts which can catch you drifting or starting to lose your grip on the wheel.

We spent a day in San Diego County driving two versions of the new Elantra GT: the regular GT with six-speed automatic and the GT Sport with six-speed manual. Each brings something a little different to the party, each compelling—from economy, fit and features to power curves, weight and fuel mileage. Elantra GT was secondary to Hyundai Sonata in a two-day, two-vehicle launch event, but we fell for it in a big way. There's little question the GT Sport has the most compelling performance specs, as borne out on the road. Despite its added weight and power, the GT Sport with DCT even delivers the top fuel mileage of the four variants, at a cost \$4000 higher than the regular GT. ■



SPECIFICATIONS GT GT SPORT

ENGINE	2.0L	1.6L turbo
HORSEPOWER	162 hp	201 hp
TORQUE	150 lb-ft	195 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONS	6-spd man or 6-spd auto	6-spd man 7-spd DCT
DRIVETRAIN	FWD	FWD
WHEELS (ALLOY)	17x7	18x7.5
TIRES	225/45R17	225/40R18
WEIGHT (lb):		
6-spd manual	2901-2989	3014-3102
6-spd auto	2943-3040	
7-spd dual clutch		3067-3155
CAPACITIES: fuel	14.0 gal	14.0 gal
oil	4.0 liters	4.2 liters
coolant	2.1 liters	2.2 liters
MPG (city/hwy/comb):		
6-spd manual	23/31/26	22/29/25
6-spd auto	24/32/27	
7-spd dual clutch		26/32/28

BRAKES:
 GT ...F: 11" vented, R: 10.3" solid (11.2" opt)
 GT SPORTF: 12" vented, R: 11.2" solid
SUSPENSION: FRONT: MacPherson strut w coils, hydraulic twin-tube shocks
REAR (GT): Coupled torsion beam axle, gas hydraulic monotube shocks, coils
REAR (GT SPORT): Multi-link independent, gas hydraulic monotube shocks, coils

STEERING:.....rack & pinion motor driven pwr
LENGTH / WHEELBASE170.9 / 104.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE34.78 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE5.9 in
HEADROOM (F/R)39.1 / 38.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)42.2 / 34.8 in
PASSENGER VOLUME96.5 cu.ft
CARGO VOLUME24.9 / 55.1 cu.ft

TRIMS AND OPTIONS

2018 Hyundai Elantra GT

BASE PRICEmanual \$19,350 / auto \$20,350
INCLUDES: 4-wheel disc brakes, drive mode select (AT only), driver's knee airbag, driver's blind spot mirror, 17-in alloy wheels w 225/45R17 tires, LED daytime running lights, auto headlight control, wheel-mounted audio/cruise/Bluetooth, 60/40 split rear seat, two-stage rear cargo floor w/cover, 8-in display, AM-FM-HD-sat w 6 speakers, Android/iOS, rear camera.

STYLE PACKAGE: Blind spot detection, rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, keyless entry/start, dual zone auto climate, auto defogger, power driver's seat w lumbar, heated front seats\$TBD

TECH PACKAGE: Full LED headlights, panoramic sunroof, electronic parking brake w auto hold, 8-in navigation system, Blue Link connected car system, Infinity 7-speaker plus subwoofer premium audio, ventilated seats\$TBD

2018 Hyundai Elantra GT Sport

BASE PRICEmanual \$23,250 / auto \$24,350
INCLUDES: Elantra GT features, plus: Blind spot detection w rear cross traffic alert, multi-link rear suspension, 18-in alloy wheels w 225/40R18 tires, full LED headlights, LED taillights, keyless entry/start, sport front seats, heated front seats, dual zone auto climate w auto defogger, electronic parking brake w auto hold, rear console air vent.

SPORT TECH PACKAGE: Smart cruise control w stop/start capability, auto emergency braking w pedestrian detection, 8-in navigation, Infinity premium audio, power driver's seat\$TBD

PAINTS: Ceramic White, Symphony Air Silver, Summit Gray, Scarlet Red Pearl, Electric Blue Metallic, Black Noir Pearl.

INTERIORS: GT: black or beige cloth or leather.
 GT SPORT: black leather w red accents.