Value and elegance. by Joe Sage

Hyundai has a new Accent sedan for 2018 (see also in this issue), while their Elantra sedan was new for 2017. A new Elantra GT 5-door hatchback arrived a few months later, but as a 2018 model, since model-year-deciding January 1 of 2017 had already come and gone. Accent was long considered a subcompact but is now EPA-classified as a compact, while Elantra remains a compact, though it has an EPA-classified midsize cabin. Sonata is of course Hyundai's midsize sedan.

While you can think of a million reasons to look at Sonata, the same is true for Elantra: it starts at $13,450 to Sonata's $20,050 and gets 40 mpg highway to Sonata's 36, both with 200-plus maximum horsepower (201 Elantra, 245 Sonata). Elantra's wheelbase is four inches shorter, overall length 11 inches shorter and its turning circle a foot tighter, while its front legroom is 3.3 inches less than Sonata's, but the rear actually has a tenth of an inch more.

If in fact, the smaller Elantra's specs seem more like an advantage to you than a tradeoff —cash saved at purchase, cash saved at the pump, easier to park and, well, try it on for size —then you have a million and one reasons to take a look at Hyundai Elantra.

If the $13,450 model sounds too spartan for you, though, here's Hyundai's answer: the Value Edition, introduced during the 2017 model year (as driven here). For 2018, it's even a little less expensive: last year, its price was $21,465 less a $1,215 discount, or $20,250. For 2018, the price is $19,850. Destination charge is up by $50 (and our optional cargo tray goes up five bucks), but the total is still $345 lower for this same vehicle in the new year.

There are a few other lineup changes for 2018: a Limited With Tech package is folded into the Limited trim, and SE is joined by SEL.

With rear disc brakes for 2018 (the starting model in 2017 was a base SE with rear drums), Value Edition's comparison is now less with the base model and more with the top-trim Limited. Value Edition has smaller wheels and some different trim elements (a bit less chrome, which, again, some buyers may prefer), though Limited has a number of driver assist technologies available as options not available on Value Edition.

At $2250 less than top-trim Elantra Limited, Elantra Value Edition has great appeal for any buyer who knows what inclusions they want and need, if these are those. If you like Elantra's size, Value Edition is also $2200 less than a base midsize Sonata, or $12,600 less than a top trim Sonata. For some buyers, this could add up to about a quadruple win. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE ....Nu 2.0L DOHC Atkinson Cycle 4-cyl
DRIVETRAIN ....FWD, normal/sport/eco modes
HP/TORQUE ....147 hp / 132 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION ....6-speed auto w SHIFTRONIC
SUSPENSION ....F: MacPherson, coils, hydraulic twin-tube gas shocks, 22mm stblzr bar R: coupled torsion beam axle, gas-filled hydraulic monotube shocks, coils
STEERING ...rack & pinion power assist motor driven
BRAKES ....F: 11.0" vented / R: 10.3" solid discs
WHEELS/TIRES ....16-in alloy / P205/55 R16
LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR ....179.9 / 106.3 / 5.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE ....34.78 ft
HEADROOM (F/R) ....38.8 / 37.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R) ....42.4 / 35.7 in
LUGGAGE CAPACITY ....14.4 cu.ft
WEIGHT ....2811-2976 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY .... 87 oct regular / 14.0 gal
MPG ....28/37/32 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE **$19,850**
INCLUDED, ALL ELANTRAS: Bluetooth, cruise control, wheel-mounted phone and audio controls.
INCLUSIONS, VALUE EDITION: Blind spot detection, rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, LED daytime running lamps, hands-free smart trunk release, power glass tilt/slide safety one-touch sunroof, heated front seats, 7" display, Android/Apple, power driver's seat w lumbar, dual climate control w clean air ionizer & auto defogger, proximity key, push button start, autodim rear mirror w Homelink & compass, leather shift knob, leather-wrapped wheel, rear disc brakes.
OPTIONS: Carpeted floor mats (125), cargo net (50), cargo tray (105)..280
DESTINATION CHARGE 885

TOTAL **$21,015**