

Trophy truck

BY JOE SAGE

We've crossed paths with the all-new 2019 Ram 1500 a number of times by now, from its national launch drive in Arizona last spring to key awards comparo events we drive in.

At Mudfest on the Olympic Peninsula last spring (the NWAPA Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards), it took the top trophy for Pickups. At the TAWA Texas Truck Rodeo last fall, it won three categories (Full-Size, Luxury and Off-Road Trucks in various trims), a Feature Award for its new eTorque Mild Hybrid powertrains, and the coveted overall Truck of Texas trophy. Here in Arizona, it won Truck of the Year at the Southwest Lifestyle Media Drive last fall. Those are just events we participated in.

The new Ram 1500 lineup also won best Pickup in the 9th annual Hispanic Motor Press Awards; *Truck Trend* Pickup Truck of the Year; and *Motor Trend* Truck of the Year. And there are many more.

The new trucks are visually transformed yet immediately recognizable. Gone are the vestigial crosshair grille, a leftover from when Ram Trucks split from Dodge ten years ago, replaced prominently by the RAM name. The big-rig fender drop has been raised another couple of inches, yet carries that spirit (big rigs have been changing, too).

Changes are more than skin-deep, though, stem to stern, inside and out (see our May/June '18 issue)—body, frame, wheels and aerodynamics; engines, transmissions, suspension and electrical systems; stylish interiors with rugged real wood, leather and metal; interface upgrades including their well-received new 12-inch infotain-

ment screen; and safety tech galore. All promise improved ride, handling, comfort, safety and load capacity. The frame is about four inches longer, adding about an inch of legroom in the front seats and three in the rear (now a whopping 45 inches).

The 2019 Ram 1500 is built of 98 percent high-strength steel in the frame, over 50 percent light-weight steel for cab and box, and aluminum just for the hood and tailgate. The combination adds strength and reduces weight, contributing to new capacities up to 2320 pounds payload and 12,750 pounds towing.

V6 models launched with a new eTorque mild hybrid engine (see awards, above), while new V8s will adopt this technology during the year.

A full week with any vehicle is useful, especially with a launch drive or comparo events as a basis. Ride, power and handling were reconfirmed as top tier. The screen systems and physical controls were highly intuitive (as always with a few finer points of note, such as having to dig into the screen to change rear-view mirror folding).

In a lineup that runs from \$31,795 for a rear-drive Tradesman to \$56,940 for a 4x4 Limited, this Laramie Longhorn 4x4 is next-to-top trim.

The packages and options on ours pretty well close the gap to the top model.

All in all, these are fine times for the pickup buyer, with almost all full-size trucks transformed this year or recently and several new midsize trucks added. Whatever your loyalties—and repeat-purchase pickup brand loyalty runs high—you owe it to yourself to drive this one. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

LAYOUT/BUILD...longitudinal, front engine, transfer case, ladder-type frame, steel cab, 5'7" double-wall steel box
ENGINE...5.7L HEMI V8 multi-displ VVT, cast iron block, alum alloy heads, hemi chambers, 10.5:1 compr
DRIVETRAIN.....4x4
HP/TORQUE.....395 hp / 410 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....8-speed automatic BHP75
TRANSFER CASE...elec BW 48-12 part-time: two-speed: 2WD hi, 4WD hi, locked, neutral, 4WD lo (2.64), locked
SUSPENSION.....**F:** upper/lower A-arms, coils, twin-tube shocks, stblzr bar; **R:** five-link w track bar, progressive rate coils, stblzr bar, twin-tube shocks, solid axle
STEERING.....electronic power rack & pinion
BRAKES.....dual-rate tandem diaphragm vacuum:
F: 14.9x1.2" vented w 2.2" two-piston pin-slider caliper.
R: 14.8x0.87" w single-piston pin-slider caliper; ABS f/r.
WHEELS / TIRES.....20-in / 275/55R20
LENGTH / WB.....(crew cab, 5'7" box) 232.9 / 144.6 in
TURNING CIRCLE.....46.2 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE.....(F/R axle) 8.2 / 8.7 in
APPRCH / BREAKVR / DEPART.....19.0 / 17.5-19.5 / 24.9°
HEADROOM (F/R).....(seats six) 40.9 / 39.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....40.9 / 45.2 in
WEIGHT / GVWR.....(crew, 5'7, 4x4) 5302 / 7100 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY...(3.92 rear) 1800 / 11,290 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....reg 87 ok, 89 recmd / 33.0 gal
MPG.....15/21/17 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE.....\$53,695
IVORY TRI-COAT PAINT.....500
CUSTOMER PREFERRED PKG 25K: skid plates for front suspension, fuel tank, steering gear, transfer case.....295
ADVANCED SAFETY GROUP: adaptive cruise w stop & go, adv brake assist, full-speed fwd collision warn plus, lane depart warn plus, parallel & perpendicular park assist w stop, surround view cameras.....1595
BED UTILITY GROUP: Four adj cargo tie-down hooks.....545
LEVEL 1 EQUIP GROUP: 12.0" touchscreen, Uconnect 4C nav, Harman Kardon 19-spkr premium sound, RamCharger wireless charging pad, SiriusXM/360, vented rear seats, blind spot w cross-path det, pwr running boards.....3595
OPTIONS: Tri-fold tonneau cover (550); 3.92 rear axle ratio (95); E-locker rear axle (545); engine active noise control (1195); panoramic sunroof (1295); 33-gallon fuel tank (445); RamBox cargo mgmt system (995); trailer brake control (295).....5415
DESTINATION CHARGE.....1695
TOTAL.....\$67,335

