

# HYPERMILING HYUNDAI

BY JOE SAGE

We had driven the all-new 2020 Hyundai Sonata at its launch event here in Arizona this winter (see our JanFeb issue). And we had attended the Sonata Hybrid reveal at the Chicago Auto Show in February (see MarchApril). In March we were to fly to LA for the Hybrid's launch event—a Hollywood reveal of both the 2020 Sonata Hybrid and 2021 Elantra (facing page), followed by a nice long drive in the Sonata Hybrid.

We had already learned a lot about the generation-eight Sonata itself at the non-hybrid launch drive here. The model goes back to 1985 (or 1989 in the US starting with gen two). For 2020, it has a new platform and chassis, enabling significant revision of body build fundamentals, proportions and details that enter a realm usually occupied only by luxury cars at two or three times the price.

Sonata follows suit to the new Kona launched the year prior, in that its restyling, though easily recognizable, moves toward more distinct personalities among models—becoming more a “set of chess pieces” than bearing one uniform look. Advanced lighting tech also plays a bigger role.

Interior styling is completely redone with a new slim horizontal instrument layout replacing the bulky, tall center stack, while adding more soft-touch material and customizable ambient lighting.

Advanced suspension not only improves ride, handling and NVH, but allows crisper body dimensions, again evoking much pricier brands.

We had learned many Sonata Hybrid fundamen-

tals when the covers came off in Chicago. The full launch drive in California would be a chance to tie it all together and get our first hands-on experience with the newest iteration.

But it was not to be. As coronavirus cases started popping up in Europe, events with huge attendance were already being cancelled in Barcelona, then Geneva. More event dominos began to fall.

The Sonata Hybrid drive event was scheduled too early to see this all coming, but ultimately too late to run. Planning and prep for these is enormous. But just a few days prior, first a pandemic was declared, then a national emergency, and this too bit the dust. Unfortunate, but a good move, as specifics only grew worse. We all know the tale.

The Elantra reveal went on, more or less as scheduled, but without attendees, via livestream.

A drive event without attendees is another thing. Within a couple of weeks, though, Hyundai pulled together the presentation (classroom) portion of the launch, complete with product specialists and engineers, and presented it via Zoom conference (our first of what would become many).

Put it all together, and after one regular Sonata and two Hybrid exposures, we can tell you a lot about the car, just not the Hybrid drive experience.

With a 54 mpg highway rating on its especially fuel-sipping Blue model (51 mpg on SEL and Limited trims), the alt-powertrain version of the new sedan claims best-in-class fuel mileage, topping its main Japanese rivals. The horsepower from its

hybrid system beats even that of the regular gasoline Sonata with either engine. And Sonata Hybrid boasts the segment's top front leg- and headroom.

Are you ready to put quarantines behind, hit the open road and roam freely again? Sonata Hybrid's range is estimated at 686 miles—enough to get you from, say, Flagstaff to Seattle or St Louis with only one stop for gas. An available solar roof system can keep the hybrid battery topped off while the car is turned off and can also add another estimated 700 or so “free miles” per year.

The Hybrid's electric drive system solves a paradox in which hybrids have not used fuel-saving torque converters because they sap energy and lose time en route to the wheels. The new Sonata Hybrid has software-logic-based Active Shift Control, which monitors rotational speed in the electric motor 500 times per second, to synchronize with rotational speed of the gasoline engine, delivering 30 percent faster and smoother shifts—and in turn quicker acceleration and better fuel economy, as well as longer durability for the transmission.

Advanced aerodynamic details such as a cross-hole grille with active air flaps, aero alloy wheels and a rear spoiler all contribute to a Cd of 0.24.

Included are an extensive range of SmartSense safety and driver assist features, with even more available optionally. A four-camera surround-view system gives you a bird's eye view. And Digital Key is an available option, offering a wide range of (Android) smartphone or NFC card access.

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.0L GDI DOHC 16v inline-4 DCVVT
HP / TORQUE	.....150 hp / 139 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR	.....permanent magnet synchronous
POWER / TORQUE	.....39 kW (51 hp) / 151 lb-ft
BATTERY	.....lithium-ion polymer 270V (max) 56 kWh
COMBINED HORSEPOWER	.....192 hp
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd electronic auto, shift lock w Shifttronic manual shift mode
SUSPENSION . F:	MacPherson strut, gas shocks, 21.8mm stblzr bar; R: multi-link, gas shocks, 18mm stblzr bar
STEERING	.....column-mounted motor-drive rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....power assist w pressure-proportioning valves; F: 12.0" vented; R: 11.2" solid
WHEELS	.....Blue: 16x6.5J alum alloy; SEL / Limited: 17x7J alum alloy
TIRES	.....Blue: P205/65R16; SEL / Limited: P215/55R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....192.9 / 111.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....36.1 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....5.3 in
COEFFICIENT OF DRAG	.....Cd 0.24
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....40.0 / 38.4 in
LEGROOM (R/R)	.....46.1 / 34.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....16.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIBUTION	.....3325-3530 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unleaded / 13.2 gal
MPG	.....Blue: 50/54/52 (city/hwy/comb); SEL / Limited: 45/51/47 (city/hwy/comb)

At the Sonata launch last winter, we had a brief drive in a still-in-development Sonata N-Line (a 290-hp light performance version, short of a full N model). Clearly, the development team is achieving great things atop the Sonata's blank canvas.

Hyundai plans to have a Sonata Hybrid delivered to us here in Arizona before long (our fourth Sonata encounter, third Hybrid), so we can get a hands-on week behind the wheel. Stay tuned! ■

# ELANTRA UPSCALES

Hyundai's Elantra compact sedan will be more than two inches longer, an inch wider and almost an inch lower, taking on an upscale four-door coupe profile and a dramatic new look for 2021, in its seventh generation. Leg, head and shoulder room are all increased, rear legroom by 2.3 inches.

Introduced by livestream from Hollywood after its in-person event with the new Sonata Hybrid was cancelled due to pandemic, the new Elantra will be immediately recognizable by its crisply angled sheet metal, a styling theme they call “Parametric Dynamics,” within the “Sensuous Sportiness” design theme introduced with the new 2020 Sonata.

Also coming for 2021 is the first-ever Elantra Hybrid, aiming for over 50 mpg.

Besides upscaling in size and going upscale in style and form, the new 2021 Elantra piles on technology beyond its price point, including segment-first wireless Android and Apple connectivity with dual Bluetooth support for two devices at once, plus available twin 10.25-inch multimedia screens (under

## Elantra Hybrid

ENGINE	.....1.6L GDI Atkinson Cycle
ELECTRIC MOTOR	.....32 kW
BATTERY	.....lithium-ion polymer 1.32 kWh
TOTAL SYSTEM OUTPUT	.....147 hp / 132 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd dual-clutch (DCT)

## Elantra SE, SEL, Limited

ENGINE	.....2.0L MPI Atkinson Cycle
HP / TORQUE	.....139 hp / 195 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....Intelligent Variable Trans (IVT)
MPG	.....tbd

one piece of glass), optional Digital Key via smartphone or NFC card, enhanced natural-language voice recognition and much more.

Built on Hyundai's K3 third-generation vehicle platform, the new Elantra is stronger and lighter, with a lower center of gravity, for increased road-hugging performance and fuel economy. The platform uses a multi-load path structure for enhanced safety in case of a collision. Rear suspension is fully independent multi-link, improving handling as well as rough road impact absorption inside.

Standard SmartSense tech includes forward collision avoidance, pedestrian detection, lane keep and lane follow assist, high beam assist, driver attention warning and a rear camera with dynamic guidelines. An additional range of features are optional.

Plans call for production to start this fall, with sales launching in the fourth quarter. ■

