

minor miracle

BY JOE SAGE

With a number of smaller SUVs and crossovers already in its stable—Kona, Kona Electric and Nexo fuel cell (where available), then Tucson en route to their larger SUVs—Hyundai is pushing the envelope with an even smaller one. Or is that pulling the envelope, when it's at the small end of the scale?

Small the new Hyundai Venue is, with a length and wheelbase about five and three inches shorter, respectively, than the until-just-now smallest Hyundai Kona. With that coming in below Tucson in size, they had already invented a new category for it: Small SUV. So for Venue? It's an Entry SUV.

This size is about market as much as function. Major touchstones throughout the vehicle's development were both weight and price. And for the same reasons, they do not forecast an AWD model in the future, putting to rest that aspect of what makes an SUV an SUV.

Hyundai acknowledges Venue effectively fills the void left when Accent's hatchback version was dropped a year or so back. (It's perhaps also reminiscent of a "tall wagon" craze some years ago.)

The vehicle's form has big benefits—easy to step into, front or rear, with rear headroom almost as tall as up front. Cargo room is more hatchlike,

but still beats that of a sedan's trunk.

Horsepower is noticeably lower than, say, Kona—121 hp, vs a choice of 147 or 175 in its Hawaiian cousin. But it also weighs about a quarter-ton less.

Features are extensive in our SEL—dual zone climate, heated seats, keyless, nav in an infotainment screen with ease of access, power windows-mirrors-locks, and a wide range of driver tech systems. (Driver tech features were too aggressive for our taste—we turned them all off or way down.)

Shift points were perfect, even in regular drive mode (which we stuck with, giving it little further thought). It's an Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT), successfully eliminating that CVT feeling.

Simple suspension corners and holds a line like a much lower and wider vehicle (once we turned off lane assistance). Notable sound is transmitted from pavement seams, but mitigation is easy—the audio system performs way beyond its price point (common with Hyundai), with great sound well before equalizer range is used up. Its turning circle is one of the tightest, and this is not guaranteed by small size—it's an achievement in its own right.

The more we drove the Venue, the more we liked it. Entry SUV is a good term, really. Entry crossover would be kind of redundant. Venue has two missions: replace the hatch and whet the appetites of aspiring SUV owners. It succeeds at both. Forgoing AWD is how it achieves all its other goals.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	1.6L transverse-4 16v DPI DOHC CVVT
HP/TORQUE	121 hp / 113 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	IVT (Intelligent Variable Transmission), gate-type, Shiftronic, hill start assist control
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, coils, gas shocks, stblzr bar; R: coupled torsion beam, twin tube shocks
STEERING	column-mounted motor-driven rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 11.0 vented disc; R: 8.0 drum
WHEELS / TIRES	17" alloy / 205/55R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	159.1 / 99.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	33.2 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.69 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.4 / 38.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.3 / 34.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	18.7 / 31.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	2612-2738 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	regular unl / 11.9 gal
MPG	30/34/32 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE..... **\$19,250**

CONVENIENCE PKG: power sunroof, sliding armrest storage box, leather steering wheel & shift knob, blind spot collision warning, rear cross-traffic collision warning.....1150

PREMIUM PKG: heated front seats & mirrors, LED heads, DRLs & taillights, 17" alloy wheels, keyless entry/start, 8" touchscreen nav w Android/Apple, SiriusXM 90-day, BlueLink connected services 3 yrs.....1750

CARPETED FLOOR MATS.....155

DESTINATION CHARGE.....1140

TOTAL..... **\$23,445**

Venue SE starts at \$17,350, and at that price it has another cool rarity—a 6-speed manual transmission (the automatic is \$1200 more).

Hyundai has built something they are confident will inspire you to shop with them again. ■

