

Show plus go

by Joe Sage

Cadillac has evolved its lineup—and its nomenclature—in broadly two waves over the past two decades, first getting rid of names, other than Escalade (DeVille was the last to go, in 2005) and going to all letters (ATS, CTS, STS, DTS for sedans, others for SUVs), then to alphanumeric (CT4, CT5, CT6 for sedans, XT for SUVs, still except for Escalade). Easy to miss in this name game are evolutions in the models themselves.

This can be especially elusive for the casual observer, as an “S” and a “5” can be easily mixed up when glancing at a stylized badge.

The car driven here is the Cadillac CT5 (five), all new for 2020, along with an all-new CT4. A new CT6 is expected for 2021.

As the names’ numbers suggest, they are basically small, medium and large. Standard size categories have become a less meaningful free-for-all industrywide, with EPA-classified compacts bearing full-size cabins and many brands offering more sizes than the traditional range, all understandable, though not always helpful. The CT5 is identified by Cadillac as a compact (though many refer to it as midsize), while they don’t name a size category for either CT4 or CT6 in press materials.

Always a luxury brand, Cadillac set out about two decades ago to grow more cojones, notable at the time in their advertising, marked by a solid rockin’ Led Zeppelin soundtrack, successfully appealing to younger buyers overall.

The first V model, the CTS-V, arrived in 2005—with a high horsepower V8, sport suspension, rear-wheel drive and even an available manual transmission—emphasis on performance. Larger STS-V and smaller ATS-V models followed.

When this CT5 V-Series hit our calendar, we weren’t sure what we were getting—new to us, sounding like something other than a full V (akin to in-betweeners from the Germans). But when it showed up, the badging was simply CT5 on the left rear, with another badge on the right (and on the front flanks) that basically incorporates a V.

As fate would have it, we had a zoom conference with Ken Kornas, Cadillac CT4 and CT5 Product Manager, during the same week we had the car, an opportunity for some clarification.

Both CT4 and CT5 are rear-drivers, available with all-wheel drive (\$2000 more on CT5, \$2600 on CT4). There are inherent performance benefits just from RWD, applying weight to drive wheels

upon acceleration. It also puts more weight in the rear, enabling close to 50-50 distribution (often closer to 60-40 in front-drive-based competitors). And it allows smooth-tracking longitudinal engine placement, as well as wheels closer to the corners for its handsome road-hugging stance.

There are four CT5 trims: Luxury, Premium Luxury, Sport and V-Series, the first three with a 237-hp 2.0L four-cylinder. Premium Luxury offers a 335-hp 3.0L twin-scroll turbo V6, but while the 2.0L Sport runs \$1000 more, there is no V6 Sport. For that, you move to the CT5 V-Series, with a 360-hp high-output version of the V6. On the one hand, they divide between the first three and V-Series, or by character they divide between the two Luxury models and the Sport and V-Series.

This approach, compared to earlier-gen V models, is a response to customer feedback suggesting the full V cars were not widely enough attainable, and that more customers still seek a premium-luxury Cadillac experience over performance. Thus decent doses of both: show plus go.

If you choose the highest-performance (so far) V-Series fork in the road, you can option your way to the best of both, via luxury packages. We were disappointed our car’s \$4190 Premium Package did not have such things as folding power mirrors, but that comes with a Platinum Package at \$6290

(while several lower-dollar packages add various bundles of driver-assist technology).

For those who miss a V above the V-Series, though, take heart—coming next summer is the CT5-V Blackwing. At this point, we know this will have such features as race-inspired carbon-fiber-backed seats and new badging; what may be different in the powertrain is yet to be revealed.

As for size, compact nomenclature seems unfair, as the CT5 does not look that small nor feel that small inside—though not entirely unfair, as it’s tight getting in and out if you’re tall, with elbow likely to meet B-pillar till you get used to it.

Horsepower is strong, at 360, torque stronger still—405 lb-ft, with 90 percent of peak torque as soon as 1800 rpm. When our foot first hit the pedal, it didn’t feel as powerful as its aggressive engine-powertrain-exhaust sound effects. This was easily and effectively remedied with a dive into the drive mode interface, which bears profiles for tour, sport, snow/ice and even track, with steering, suspension, powertrain, sound and such customizable, stored in My Mode or new V-Mode, accessible via a steering wheel switch any time you want to show off. There are also valet and teen driver modes.

We were happy using performance settings for most everything, but the lowest-key stealth setting for engine sound (we like to be having more fun than the neighborhood or police may think we are). All in all, we found what we’ve found on



Cadillacs before: you may dive deeper into more plentiful options than average at first, but once set up, you’re good to go pretty much forever.

We took the CT5 V-Series out to Horseshoe Dam Road for an hour or two of beautiful hills and twisties. Here, its horsepower level is pretty perfectly balanced, and AWD grip can also prove itself, both in cornering and hitting sandy patches at speed. Out there by ourselves, we switched from our personalized profile (all performance except engine sound) to our V-Mode setup (adding back maximum engine sound), which was a nice pairing on an open road.

We’re scheduled for a week in the CT4 for the next issue, this time the Premium Luxury trim, for a timely comparison of size, powertrain and style-features approaches. Stay tuned! ■



SPECIFICATIONS

FACTORY	Lansing, Michigan
ENGINE	3.0L twin turbo V6 SIDI 24v DOHC
HP/TORQUE	360 hp / 405 lb-ft
	90% of peak torque at 1800 rpm
TRANSMISSION	10L80 10-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
ZERO-TO-60	4.6 sec
SUSPENSION	Magnetic Ride Control w V-Series calibration: F: MacPherson-type w dual lower ball joints & direct-act stblzr bar; R: five-link indep, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	rack-mounted elec power assist, variable assist, V-Series calibration
BRAKES	four-wheel Brembo 4-piston fixed caliper vented disc: F: 13.6x1.2; R: 12.4x0.9
WHEELS	19x8.5 aluminum
TIRES	245/40R19 summer-only performance
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	193.8 / 116 in
TURNING CIRCLE	na
GROUND CLEARANCE	na
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.0 / 36.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.4 / 37.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	na
WEIGHT	3975 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	na
MPG	17/25/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$47,695
V PREMIUM PACKAGE: lighting pkg, navigation & Bose premium audio, climate pkg	4190
ALL-WHEEL DRIVE	2000
SEATS: Whisper Beige/Jet Black accents leather appointed seating	1500
DRIVER AWARENESS PLUS PACKAGE: Intelli-beam headlamps, following distance indicator, 8" color DIC gauge cluster, lane keep assist w lane departure warning, heads-up display	1300
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$57,680

