

Road beat: Significant refinement to Elantra GT



Small changes to the 2016 Elantra GT made a big difference. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

While not much has changed mechanically with the 2016 Elantra GT, with most every technical specification remaining the same, sometimes just small changes can make huge differences. In this case, besides the improvements in next-gen NAV and Blue Link connectively, the most notable is the new GT front end and it is a doozy. Most mid-cycle updates are usually ho-hum, but Hyundai is using its interpretation of the Fluidic Sculpture front ends now incorporated on the Genesis and the much improved Sonata, is making the new GT one of the best looking sporty hatchbacks in its class.

Elantra GT is now the high styled, aggressive car it was

suppose to be. Add the new 17-inch alloys and you have a sporty sedan/hatchback that can snap some heads. It looks much more expensive than its under \$20 grand price of admission.



Specification

Price \$19,560 to \$25,500 all in

Engine 2.0L DOHC, 16 valve inline four 173 hp @ 6,500 rpm

154 lb-ft of torque @ 4,700 rpm

Transmission

Six speed Automatic

Six speed manual

Chassis layout

Front transverse engine, front wheel drive

Dimensions

Length 169.3 inches

Wheelbase 104.3 inches

Width 70.1 inches

Height 57.9 inches

Track (f/r) 61.0/61.5 inches

Ground clearance 5.5 inches

Weight 3,053 pounds

Fuel capacity 13.2 gallons

Cargo capacity (rear seats

down/up) 51.0/23.0 cubic feet

Passenger volume 96.1 cubic feet

Steering lock to lock 2.78 turns

Turning circle 34.8 feet

Co-efficient of drag 0.30

Performance

0-60 mph 7.61 seconds

50-70 mph 4.25 seconds

50-70 uphill 6.85 seconds

Fuel economy EPA rated
24/33/27 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 36.1 mpg on the highway and 29 mpg in rural country driving.

Size-wise the GT remains a small compact with a length of just 169 inches on a comparatively long 104-inch wheelbase and 70-inch width. It stands 58-inches tall, although it looks lower. While almost every dimension is average for a compact, length is 10 inches shorter than average and that is a good thing for two reasons, first it makes it easier to park and maneuver and second, clever design gives it an interior volume larger than most midsize cars, allowing the cargo capacity of some small SUVs with 51-cubic-feet of cargo capacity with the spacious second row seats folded flat.

Also making the GT is its more powerful 2.0L inline high tech four cylinder engine (DOHC, 16 valves) that is direct injected. Direct injection offers two benefits. With its higher compression ratio (11.5:1) it gives you significantly more horsepower and fuel economy all on regular gas. Hyundai which sells itself on value and price demonstrates its high value content by offering this expensive system of direct

injection.

Relative to performance, this 2 liter, four cylinder engine cranks out 173 hp at 6,500 and a peak torque of 154 pounds at 4,700 rpm meaning at 4,700 rpm the hp output is a strong 138 hp. It drives the front wheels via a six speed auto cog swapper with a manual mode for those who like to shift themselves. Gear changes are quite expedient. A six-speed manual is also available. I have driven them both and go with the auto as you will see.

Acceleration times for the auto GT were 0-60 mph in 7.61 seconds, 50-70 mph in 4.25 seconds and an uphill simulated pass requiring 6.85 seconds. Compared to the manual the auto GT is actually quicker in the passes and virtually identical in 0-60 mph runs with the manual recording 7.57, 4.55 and 7.43 seconds for the same series of tests. It demonstrates how efficient the new automatics are and their quicker shifts. The Auto also overcomes a negligible weight penalty of 53 pounds.

Fuel economy for the automatic version according to the EPA should suffer by about a mpg and it does. EPA posts numbers of 24/33/27 mpg city/highway/combined whereas the manual version shows numbers of 24/34/28 mpg. Reality shows the GT returning 29 mpg overall, with 36 mpg on the highway at 70 mph. During a 150 mile trip to South Lake Tahoe and back the GT averaged 35.6 mpg, which is excellent especially considering the trip from Rescue to SLT up the long hill averaged 28.7 mpg. The manual returned about one more mpg over the auto, not significant.

Handling is very good. Suspension is compact car standard MacPherson Struts (with higher spring rates) up front and a semi independent stiffer torsion beam out back. Coils are at all four corners along with Sachs gas filled shocks and stab bars at each end. Steering is a very quick (2.78 turns lock to lock) adjustable (effort levels of comfort, normal and sport) electric powered rack. It's all alleged to be sports tuned. It

is credible when pushed hard in the corners with benign, predictable handling, but there is a little too much body roll when above seven-tenths in the twisties. Overall handling could be described as smart.

Standard alloys are 17X7 inches shod with wide 215/45 rubber which help matters in the changing directions department. There is way too much handling power for Aunt Tildie on the way to Sunday tea, so take it easy.

But going to Sunday tea with Aunt Tildie certainly will not upset her tummy as the ride quality is about perfect, soft enough not to jar her teeth loose, but firm enough to prevent any chance of car sickness. Hyundai has done a nice job in balance. A buddy of mine who rides a Ducati and drives an Alfa (we call him Rico) remarked about the perfect balance of ride and handling. It is also very quiet, with the engine spinning an inaudible 2,500 rpm at 70 mph with no wind, tire or road noise. When you add in the high level of performance and sporty, predictable handling, this becomes an incredible value starting at under \$20 large and there is more to talk about.



The ride is smooth.

Braking is excellent stopping from 40 mph in 41 feet with binders consisting of four-wheel discs (front ventilated) and all the braking and stability acronyms. Seven airbags are also standard.

Inside are optional leather seats which are sublime and

heating is standard along with cruise, full power, remote entry and more. The instrument binnacle is about perfect as is the entire layout. Rear seating is roomy for two but will work for three. Quality soft touch trim is everywhere. The overall package is enjoyable to drive any way you slice it, never mind liked to be seen in.

Pricing starts at just below \$20 large, my tester was loaded with the Style package, which adds about 10 useful items for \$1,975, and the Tech package at \$3,950, which adds leather, Nav, giant sunroof and more. I could live without the sunroof, but the point is that with everything optional with the \$825 for the boat from Ulsan, Korea the total is a not bad \$26,675. In today's market with lesser equipped Priuses costing \$10K more, it becomes a bargain.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.