

DRIVE

The Hill Country's guide to the hottest new vehicles on the market



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Lincoln MKC

— A luxury SUV built for the Lone Star State

By Donna Hatch
Features Editor
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When I was asked to test-drive a 2015 Lincoln MKC, I was hesitant. Not because I didn't think I'd enjoy it, but because I thought I'd enjoy it too much and would not want to climb back into my own car when the test drive was complete.

My reservations were justified.

While I love my 2004 Honda CRV, there was a noticeable difference in the way the Lincoln MKC — a luxury crossover SUV — not only handles but also how it feels to sit behind the wheel. In a word, lavish.

It boasts electric power-assisted steering, a 2.0L EcoBoost engine, 2.3 L EcoBoost powertrain, AdvanceTrac with roll stability control, lane-keeping system, cruise control, cross-traffic alert, push button start, an active noise control system, a hands-

free liftgate and more.

The interior trims — glossy wood with matte finish in the car I drove — are tastefully and artfully done. The car offers all the high-tech necessities in today's auto marketplace, including hands-free calling, rearview camera and a state-of-the-art THX sound system.

From a performance perspective, the MKC was a dream to drive.

It's been re-engineered with a wider suspension track, a unique optional 285-horsepower, turbocharged, 2.3-liter four-cylinder — and it's so quiet. When I was cocooned inside, the outside world could not intrude.

I knew there was a reason Matthew McConaughey likes this car. Check out his commercial at www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoGGDKV88Fg.

If it's good enough for a Hollywood A-lister — and a son of the Lone Star State — it's good enough for me.



LINCOLN MKC
Base Price | \$33,100
Engine | 2.3L 4-cyl • **Drivetrain** | All-wheel drive
Transmission | 6-speed automatic
Horse Power | 285 hp
Fuel Economy | 18/26 mpg

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Chevy Cruze



The perfect vehicle for a 1st-time driver

By Caitlin Clark
Staff Writer

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I'll be the first person to admit that I know nothing about cars.

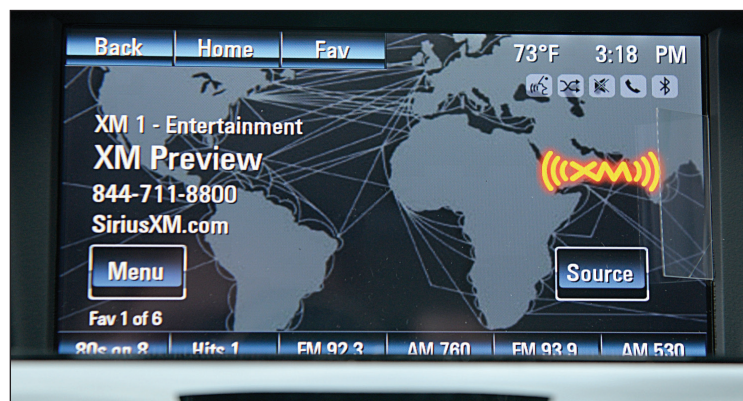
When I bought my first vehicle a little over a year ago, my input ranged from, "that looks like a car," to, "that's ugly." With coaxing from the dealership and my parents, I settled on a Honda Civic, which I love.

That being said, I was excited to test drive the 2014 Chevy Cruze Turbo Diesel to see how my Civic stacks up.

Buyers of compact sedans, especially ones like myself, aren't usually trying to make an artistic statement with their vehicle selection. However, the Cruze delivers in the style department, with sleek exteriors and plush leather interiors.

It's a compact car, but feels spacious once you get inside. While I test-drove the Cruze by myself, I felt confident that backseat passengers would feel comfortable.

I was most impressed by the extensive array of convenient technology features offered by the Cruze. The Chevrolet MyLink infotainment system with a 7-inch diagonal color touch-screen on the dash puts the world at your fingertips. You can stream music, get directions, access



contacts and more all in one place.

I had trouble connecting my iPhone to the system via Bluetooth, but there is also an option to connect using a USB port.

The Cruze has all of the modern bells and whistles I enjoy, including a rearview camera, which is critical for drivers like myself who need all the help they can get in the reversing department.

To be honest, I need help with driving in general. Luckily, the Cruze comes with 10 standard air bags, and it has won several safety awards.

I felt completely safe and confident while driving the Cruze, which I think makes it a good pick for beginning drivers.

Safety and style aside, I really enjoyed driving the Cruze. I stayed inside the Kerrville city limits, but I had no trouble picking up speed while passing slow drivers on Junction Highway, and the ride was extremely smooth.

My only gripe with the 2014 Cruze Turbo Diesel is how noisy it is to me.

The car has been designed to reduce noise and vibration often

associated with earlier generation diesel cars. And while it's certainly not as loud as a diesel truck, I could still hear that distinctive clatter while driving the Cruze, especially at low speeds.

This may not bother people who've grown up driving and riding in vehicles with diesel engines, but I found the noise distracting.

To be fair, the Cruze Turbo Diesel has the best highway fuel economy of any gasoline or diesel car in America. With up to 46 miles per gallon highway, you'll get the most from each gallon.

Because of its fuel efficiency, safety and great tech features, I think the 2014 Cruze Turbo Diesel is a great car for anyone buying their first vehicle, especially students or others who don't want to spend tons of money on gas.

As stated before, I'm not very opinionated about cars. I just need to be able to safely get from Point A to Point B.

However, I truly do think the Cruze is a great compact car, not just for people like me who aren't picky, but anyone who wants something fun, safe and efficient.



CHEVY CRUZE

Base Price | \$25,695

Engine | 2.0L turbocharged clean diesel

Drivetrain | Front wheel drive

Transmission | 6-speed manual

Horse Power | 138 hp

Fuel Economy | 28/46 mpg

Bluetooth | Yes • **Navigation** | Yes

Heated Seats | Optional

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Chrysler 200C

— a car that can almost drive itself

By Mark J. Armstrong
Assistant Managing Editor
mark.armstrong@dailytimes.com

We’ve all speculated for years that it’s only a matter of time before they make a car that will drive itself. Well, now the 2015 Chrysler 200c comes about as close to driving itself as any car can.

Test driving the 200c, I was immediately curious about the little car icon on the dash that was sometimes white, green or yellow.

Through a process of elimination, trial and error and some less than perfect driving, I found that it was the lane assist feature, which was alerting me anytime I left the center of my lane. Not only that, but the wheel would give a gentle nudge back in the right direction, too.

And that’s not all. This car also comes with a parking assist program that, according to Chrysler

— I’ll admit I wasn’t OK with trying this out — “controls the steering angle” while the driver follows “onscreen directions for gear position, brake and accelerator.”

There’s also warning indicators when you get too close to the curb, blind spot monitoring, adaptive cruise control that will adjust to distance of vehicles in front of the car and a back view camera that uses dynamic gridlines to show the driver where the vehicle will go even when turning.

And yes, I did take my hands off the wheel long enough to see that it will stay between the lines by itself, only to have the car tell me to put my hands back on the wheel.

The 200c is a mid-size luxury sedan with all the other standard bells and whistles. It’ll talk to your phone, has auto lights, individual climate control, leather seats and lots of storage.

It has eight airbags, keyless



entry and remote starter, a V-6 engine with plenty of power, and 32 miles to the gallon on the highway ain’t too shabby. What probably was most impressive was you get all this for a sticker price of \$33,000. Base price for the 200c starts at around \$26,000.

On the downside, I will say all that technology can be a bit distracting. During the two days

See **200c**, page 11

CHRYSLER 200C

- Base Price** | \$25,695
- Engine** | 3.6 L Inline V6
- Drivetrain** | Front-wheel drive
- Transmission** | 9-speed automatic transmission
- Horse Power** | 184-295 hp (depending on model)
- Fuel Economy** | 19/32 mpg



5x5.5

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CHEVY COLORADO
Base Price | \$20,120
Engine | 3.6L V6
Drivetrain | 4-Wheel Drive (optional)
Transmission | 6-speed automatic
Horse Power | 202-305 HP (depending on build)
Fuel Economy | 20/27 mpg
Bluetooth | Yes
Navigation | Yes

Chevy Colorado

— a high-tech ride built for adventure

By **J.D. Moore**
Online Editor
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The Chevy Colorado got an infamous debut at the 2014 World Series this year, and it's now living up to its viral well-known phrase.

For those not in the loop, after the San Francisco Giants took home the Fall Classic, and Giants ace Madison Bumgarner was being awarded the World Series MVP award, GM representative Rikk Wilde spoke the famous phrase which is now associated with the vehicle.

"It has plenty of technology and stuff," Wilde said as he fumbled through his words to describe the new mid-sized truck being given to Bumgarner.

Since then, the phrase has become a meme, a marketing term and most of all, the truth about GM's newest truck.

After stepping off the production line for two years, the Chevy Colorado is back for 2015 with several upgraded features and comforts to make this blue collar truck

feel like a vehicle designed for the rich and famous.

The first piece of technology that jumps out in the new line of trucks is the center console, which holds a universal set of features. Access to Sirius XM satellite radio, Pandora and other streaming media is available at the swipe of a finger — but it's more fun to use the voice control function.

The truck responds to commands well with this feature, such as telling it "Give me directions to 123 Main St." or "Change the station to Hair Metal Nation." It also provides a hands-free option to stay in full command of all technological features for the driver.

The truck also has features that will benefit passengers as well. In a never-before-seen feature, several GM vehicles — such as the Colorado — will now feature 4G WiFi hotspots through OnStar. The technology makes wireless access to the internet possible for anyone riding in the car, regardless of where the vehicle is located.

See **Colorado**, page 8

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Colorado | continued from page 7

With the amount of technology that's in the machine, there's plenty to praise for the cutting edge. However, Chevrolet certainly didn't forget about the basics of why someone wants to purchase a vehicle.

The engine, which features one of the most reliable piston systems in recent GM history, is a smooth V6 engine with plenty of towing and power capability. The truck handles hills with ease, and riding off-road

trails with the 4-wheel drive is one of the most fun things to do in the vehicle.

Despite being a mid-size truck, the vehicle runs and accelerates without making a sound, one of the most shocking things about the truck. The engine is about as quiet as you'd expect from a Toyota Prius or other small compact engine. In fact, it's hard to notice the engine running when standing 10 feet away from it.

The engine is a serene beast and technology makes the truck shine

with features, but what sells the vehicle is the comfort of the interior.

The seats, backed with polyurethane foam, are some of the most comfortable seats on the market today. The lumbar support and firm backing makes driving the Colorado a dream, and with the ample leg room, it easily accommodates a 6-foot-tall driver.

The Colorado has several trims and sizes coming out in 2015, including a Z71 sport model, a long bed model and a king cab, 4-door model.

From the first impressions of the vehicle, this is an MVP-worthy piece of Detroit manufacturing, certainly worthy of its notoriety of "technology and stuff."





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GMC SIERRA 1500
Base Price | \$25,695
Engine | 5.3L V8 EcoTec3
Drivetrain | Front-wheel drive
Transmission | 6-speed automatic
Horse Power | 285 hp
Fuel Economy | 16/23 mpg
Bluetooth | Yes
Navigation | Yes
Heated Seats | Optional

GMC Sierra 1500

New full-size truck offers added comfort

By Sean Batura
Staff Writer

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For someone who’s never relied on anything larger than a small SUV — an old Explorer that croaked nine years ago — it was initially intimidating to get inside one of GMC’s newest 1/2-ton pickups this past week.

But it wasn’t hard to get comfortable in the Sierra 1500 2WD, with its roomy interior, supple seats and advanced safety features. My first maneuver, backing up, came easy; the vehicle’s rear vision camera proved very useful.

My trepidation over driving the Sierra — a tank, compared to my little Japanese sedan — quickly subsided after I found the truck handled very well. I think it was my first experience with electric, variable-assist power rack-and-pinion steering, which made driving the beast a lot easier for a pickup newbie like me.

The truck boasts the ability to connect to the Internet and has

no less than five USB ports, two power outlets and at least one MP3 jack, bringing it fully into the 21st century.

Accelerating required a heavier foot than I expected, but this only ensured the power of the truck’s 5.3L V8 engine was available when, and only when, I wanted it. I was surprised at how smooth of a ride the truck afforded me. The 2015 Sierra’s spring isolator is thicker than the previous year’s model, and its spring rate is higher, which made the bumps and potholes in the back alley behind The Kerrville Daily Times barely detectable.

According to GMC, the model I drove offers the best V8 fuel economy of any fullsize pickup, no small thing for someone to whom fuel efficiency probably is among the top two considerations in purchasing a new vehicle.

I was saddened the sky this last week wasn’t amenable to star watching with a friend, as that’s about the

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Ford Mustang GT

— a sports car that will turn heads, draw admirers

By Chris Derrett
Sports Editor

chris.derrett@dailytimes.com

Honestly, I felt inadequate reviewing the 2015 Mustang GT, considering it has more power than the Civic I drove in high school, the Mazda 3 I drive now and any economy car I may buy in the future — combined.

This year's redesigned Mustang has plenty of performance, comfort and wow factor, and I've got the admirers to prove it.

The Mustang drew attention from another Mustang driver at a Kerrville gas station and employees at a local restaurant. They knew it was a Mustang, although I think the new look pleasantly surprised all who saw it.

The 2015 Mustang sports a sleeker rear end and a curvier front end than previous models, a shape that may raise eyebrows among Mustang purists but undoubtedly turns heads on the road.

Speaking of the road, the car has great pickup as one would expect from a 5.0 liter V8 cranking out 435 horsepower. There are a number of modes — normal, snow-wet, sport and track — which tailor one's driving experience to his or her liking.

The track mode allows the driver to control variables while disabling traction control. I could feel the difference off the line without



traction control, and I also felt more pronounced downshifting in track mode (with a six-speed automatic transmission).

A feature I didn't try is a "track app" called line lock, which locks the front brakes while letting the rear tires spin for burnouts. Of course, Ford says racing will void the warranty, so burn out at your own risk.

The cockpit (well, I guess I should call it that considering the speedometer has "Ground Speed" written on it) is loaded with comfort and technology. Phones can be connected via Bluetooth and controlled on an LCD screen, which operates other features like the GPS and fully automatic air conditioning system.

FORD MUSTANG GT

Base Price | \$25,695

Engine | 3.6 L Inline V6

Drivetrain | Rear wheel drive

Transmission | 9-speed automatic transmission

Horse Power | 300 hp @ 6500 rpm

Fuel Economy | 19/32 mpg

Bluetooth | Yes

Navigation | Yes

Heated Seats | Yes

It may not look like any of its past brethren, but the 2015 Mustang is a blast to drive and a work of art even when it's standing still.



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1500 | continued from page 9

only purpose I could imagine for the truck's bed during the vehicle's short time in my possession.

But for the more handy, the truck's EcoTec3 engine offers great power for pulling trailers and hauling, according to GMC's fact sheet on the vehicle, and the truck is even equipped with a trailer brake controller at one's fingertips on the steering wheel, and a trailer sway control system.

Suffice it to say, no one was harmed in my recent test driving forays, and the prospect of someday owning a pickup seemed a little less remote after I pulled into Crenwelge Motors and said goodbye to the Sierra 1500.



200c | continued from page 6

I drove the 200c, I kept finding new buttons I didn't know what they were for. Naturally, the best way to find out what they do was to push them, sometimes with unexpected results.

Given enough time and familiarity with the car, I'm sure this would be less of an issue.

On the plus, there's plenty of storage, including a couple of hidden compartments, places to plug in all the electronic devices you could possibly want and plenty of room in the trunk.

I've test driven a number of luxury sedans before, including the 2011 Chrysler 300c, and to be honest, I never liked any of them until now. The others I've driven felt like the technology was thrown into the car just to say it was there with no plan or reason behind it.

With the 200c, it feels like someone actually sat down with a plan and knew up front what the driving experience should be like. The technology actually feels like it's there to make it better, and for that reason, the 200c tops my list of luxury sedans.

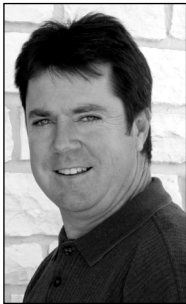


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