2008 Chevrolet Malibu Takes Top Spot in kbb.com Mid-Size Sedan Comparison Test

Kbb.com Editors Compare Six New Vehicles in Best-Selling Mid-Size Sedan Segment

IRVINE, Calif., Oct. 21 /PRNewswire/ -- The expert editors of Kelley Blue Book's http://www.kbb.com/ recently conducted a highly comprehensive mid-size sedan value comparison test between six of the top new vehicles in the class and declared the 2008 Chevrolet Malibu winner. In an all-new video recently posted to the Latest News section of kbb.com and http://www.youtube.com/kbb, the editors round up the newest versions of the top-selling mid-size sedans -- Chevrolet Malibu, Honda Accord, Nissan Altima, Hyundai Sonata, Toyota Camry and Ford Fusion -- and detail their observations and opinions on each vehicle, ultimately declaring the Malibu the overall winner in the segment. In the spirit of the times, each of the vehicles tested in the kbb.com 2008 mid-size sedan value comparison test were outfitted with standard four-cylinder engines and automatic transmissions (the way consumers purchase them most often), and five of the six models return highway fuel economy of at least 30 miles per gallon.

Every year since before the turn of the millennium, the mid-size sedan took top honors as the best-selling car in the country. The mid-size sedan's status as the definitive family car, however, has taken a hit due to the popularity of the SUV for many years. Now that gas prices and the economy have new-car buyers seeking better fuel economy and thinking small, the mid-size sedan is ready for a return to prominence. Combining varying levels of comfort, performance, value, amenities, roominess, safety and fuel economy, the mid-size sedan is just the answer many new-car buyers are looking for.

"The mid-size sedan segment is full of so many great options, and we set out to find the best of the best in overall value, and thus the best overall choice for consumers to consider, in this stellar group of popular cars," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book and kbb.com. "We were very impressed with all of the cars we tested, but our team found that the Chevy Malibu simply was the best all-around in its class. The others just don't quite measure up to all the Malibu has to offer in terms of interior and exterior styling, performance, safety and overall value."

The comprehensive value comparison tests conducted by the entire kbb.com editorial staff included scoring multiple points of consideration for each vehicle in each of the following categories: exterior, interior, driving dynamics, safety (both active and passive safety), crash ratings, and value (examining both New Car Blue Book® Values, which are the actual transaction values of what each vehicle is currently selling for, as well as projected future resale values).

Kbb.com 2008 Mid-Size Sedan Comparison Test Rankings & Editorial Comments

1. 2008 Chevrolet Malibu

The newest Chevy Malibu just seems to do everything well. Not only does it look great inside and out, it's also smooth on the highway, remarkably quiet and still eager around town and in the hills. From its artistically sculpted exterior design to its lush, upscale interior, this is a car that recalls the days when General Motors set the style leadership for the world. Our testers were impressed with what we regarded as its uncanny balance of ride and handling, and the Malibu also delivers best-in-class fuel economy. The Malibu simply is the closest thing there is to a one-size-fits-all mid-size family sedan.

2. 2008 Honda Accord

The Honda Accord brings world-class refinement to the mainstream. Save for a

few polarizing elements such as the design and layout of the audio and climate controls, the Honda could easily have taken home the trophy. Several praised its sporty handling, but a few of us felt the Accord offered a ride that was a little too stiff for the family sedan class. On the safety front, Accord offers a remarkable level of active and passive safety equipment. In the ownership-cost area, its high resale value was accompanied by a high initial price, and its projected fuel costs were higher than most competitors. By a very close margin, our testers deemed its exterior design and execution, as well as its driving dynamics, number one in the class, besting even the Malibu.

3. 2008 Nissan Altima

Though the Nissan Altima's exterior styling seems a little long in the tooth to some, its sporty handling and smooth continuously variable automatic transmission impressed our editors. Testers liked the excellent rear-seat access, strong technology package offerings and the very visible, intuitive instrument panel. In safety, the Altima fell short of its competitors because important active safety items like traction control and stability control are optional rather than standard, but its high relative resale value and low fuel costs helped the Altima to gain high marks on the price-value comparison.

4. 2009 Hyundai Sonata

The refreshed-for-2009 Hyundai Sonata features, by most accounts, a markedly improved interior with seemingly high-quality materials and a simple dash with high-mounted audio controls that garnered praise from our testers. It doesn't have the same level of to-the-bone refinement as the others, but by some measurements it's indeed the best bang for the buck. Strong safety performance and positive overall value helped move Sonata into an impressive fourth-place finish.

5. 2008 Toyota Camry

For some buyers, the sales-leading, smooth-riding, straightforward, reputable Toyota Camry is the best mid-size sedan on the market. Others might want something less ho-hum. In this comparison, its run-of-the-mill exterior and interior styling and execution plus uninspiring driving dynamics pushed it lower on the list than many would have predicted. However, Camry scored quite well on the safety front, and its high resale value and straightforward dash won praise from the kbb.com editors.

6. 2008 Ford Fusion

In this field of strong contenders, all it took for the Ford Fusion to wind up in last place was to lose a point here and a point there, particularly with its four-star crash ratings in several areas compared to the five-star ratings of its competitors. However, we particularly liked its upscale interior and logical, easy to understand controls. Some felt the Fusion's ride and handling balance was the best of the bunch and ideal for the category, but we were disappointed that it lacked a shift-it-yourself feature on the automatic transmission, and we also were distressed by the lack of electronic stability control even as an option.

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