

FULLY evolved BY JOE SAGE

Take the solid Mazda CX-5 compact utility, cross-breed it with the Mazda3—a small sedan that offers pretty much everything the top-rated Mazda6 does, in a smaller package—and you get the Mazda CX-3 subcompact utility. The formula is almost sure to succeed, and it does.

You'll smile at trademark Mazda style and features immediately, from its standup center screen to the freestanding transparent heads-up display.

Features abound on our top trim Grand Touring model. In fact, its small size could make you wish it had a couple fewer at times, as the cupholders, armrest and smartphone connections overlap.

Size is indeed one of its defining factors. Your correspondent is over six feet tall and had to reverse-jackknife to enter and duck deep to exit. But this is why the lineup comes in sizes.

Styling is leading edge, from healthy 18-inch wheels on such a small unit, to its floating roof effect (a blacked-out pillar treatment now showing up also on a couple of top-dollar crossovers).

It's not a rocket, and you wouldn't expect it to be at 146 hp, nor is it a flyweight at just under two tons. But its 2-liter SkyActiv four, fed through a proven 6-speed auto, is one of the most responsive mainstream automatics we've driven lately. Step on it—and go.

There is decent space behind the rear seats, and adventure-seeking twosomes can pack a significant volume of cargo, for such a small vehicle. The doors open quite wide, yet pulls are easy to reach, and the rear hatch refreshingly lets you operate it at your own speed, nice on a rainy day.

Considering our example is the top trip model—Grand Touring AWD—fully outfitted with just one perhaps expendable option at \$550 and one extensive driving tech package at just \$1920, yet still is out the door for less than \$30,000, the value delivered in the Mazda CX-3 is undeniable.

Opt for FWD and a base trim level, and you can buy in at \$19,960 while getting 35 MPG highway.

If only we fit in it. But you might. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE/DRIVETRAIN	.....SkyActiv-G 2.0L 4-cyl / AWD
HP/TORQUE	.....146 hp / 146 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....SkyActiv-D 6-spd Sport Mode auto
SEATING CAPACITY	.....5-passenger
WHEELS	.....18-inch alloy
TURNING CIRCLE	.....34.8 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	.....12.4 to 44.5 cu ft
WEIGHT	.....3840 lb
MPG	.....27/32/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$26,240
MAZDA MOBILE START	.....550
NAVIGATION	.....n/c
SIRIUSXM SATELLITE RADIO	.....n/c
GRAND TOURING I-ACTIVSENSE PACKAGE: Radar cruise control, smart city brake, smart brake, variable rain-sensing wipers, lane departure warning, auto headlights, high beam control	.....1920
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....880
TOTAL	.....\$29,590

