

SIZABLE ACHIEVEMENT by Joe Sage

In the last issue, we outlined the related evolution of Cadillac's current lineup and nomenclature, as we drove the new CT5 V-Series. That CT5 (yes, 5 looks a lot like S, in print or on a vehicle badge, and there used to be a CTS) is the middle of three sedan sizes: CT4, CT5, CT6. The XT5 we are driving here is not quite the middle of the utilities: XT4, XT5 and XT6 add the big Escalade (and longer Escalade ESV) at the top of their size range.

We had originally had the CT4 sedan scheduled for this cycle, a chance to visit those differences. A logistical change brought us the XT5 utility, instead. Rather than comparing 4-size and 5-size sedans, we'd be able to compare the 5-size sedan and 5-size utility. Sooner or later, we hope to try them all, but this is a useful comparison for now.

The whole size thing is pertinent here, as our first thought when we got in the XT5 was, "This is a midsize? It's enormous inside! Spacious isn't even the word. It's big! tall! wide! Expansive, with plenty of legroom. Wow!"

User systems are very intuitive, easily set up. Details, as with all brands always, have some debatable oddities, but we've long noted that Cadillac's options will generally be good indefinitely once you set them, and ones that don't even inter-

est you are easily ignored—sizable plusses.

There is useful redundancy between a control knob on the console (rotate and/or scoot side to side) and touch control on the center screen. Each option has a useful explanatory phrase or paragraph. Binnacle menu options are crystal clear.

Seats are both heated and cooled, the essential setup for Arizona.

Cameras are top-notch, though we generally see little value in a front view on the main screen, basically a repeat of what we see out the windshield at the expense of other information or functions. As in a wide range of current GM vehicles, the inside rearview mirror can be a camera image—useful in an SUV with an interior potentially full of heads, headrests and cargo—though it means an infinity-focus windshield view and a close-focus mirror view, which can cost critical refocus time.

The Bose Performance Series audio system has a lot of tonal headroom, with such an unusually strong low end, we knocked it down below the neutral point, to counter it with enough treble.

So much did we acclimate to the feel of a big pickup or Escalade (at least without real-time comparison), we were surprised upon exiting to realize how relatively low 7.9 inches of ground clearance

can feel. This will be a welcome combination for a great many people—rough road chops and a big interior with easy ingress/egress.

There are three trim levels of XT5, with two engines and front-drive/AWD options varying by trim level. Being Cadillac, even the base level is known as Luxury. That model offers one engine, a 2.0L turbo-four with 237 hp, and starts at \$44,095, or \$46,195 with optional all-wheel drive.

Premium Luxury is next up, the middle of three trims, and is the most adaptable of the three, the only one available with either of two engines and either drivetrain. It starts at \$48,795 with front-drive and the 2.0-liter. The 310-hp 3.7L V6 in our sample adds just \$1000, and its AWD adds \$2000.

The line-topper by price is XT5 Sport, which at \$55,095 includes the V6 and AWD, its only layout. Figured including those apples-to-apples, Sport is just \$3300 more than a V6-AWD Premium Luxury, while also bringing you tighter steering, a performance-adapted chassis with adaptive suspension, dual-clutch Sport AWD and 20-inch wheels.

Our Premium Luxury trim forgoes all that additional performance engineering (and style, in the case of the wheels and some other details), but does of course have a Sport drive mode, as well as

Tour and Off-Road modes.

Whatever vehicle we're driving for a week, we inevitably notice how much presence they have all around us, and we quickly realized we were surrounded by the Cadillac XT5 in traffic. XT5 is in fact Cadillac's top seller, by a healthy margin. Its sales are roughly 25 percent higher than the smaller XT4 and bigger Escalade, while a new XT6, bigger than XT5 and smaller than Escalade, is likely to also do well. In line with industry trends, all the Cadillac SUVs are now well ahead of sedan sales.

While all vehicles in the Cadillac stable are immediately brand-recognizable, the XT4-5-6 have a high degree of style similarity among themselves, while the king daddy Escalade jumps a few levels in visual impact. Escalade has an aggressiveness some buyers may shy away from, possibly another attraction of the XT5 (or new XT6) for some buyers.

We took readily to the XT5 as a daily driver for a week—equal parts user-friendly and proud. Its application of 310 horses to the road was as transparent or as noticeable as you may want, depending upon drive style and conditions—nicely balanced, powerfully responsive without overkill, but with plenty more in reserve if needed. The drivetrain also provides just the right acoustics, and only at the right kind of time—when giving it a little gun, it provides a nice low-key V8-style rumble.

On the edge of town, we found ourselves on a stretch of country highway evolving into new subdivision roads, with just one of two lanes paved at that time, and everyone using that one lane—until

there was some two-way traffic. Even when forced to drop onto the very rough unpaved side (and with no time to switch to Off-Road mode), we found the XT5's ride a perfect mix of firm and smooth.

A few inevitable feature nitpicks aside (as with any vehicle), we found ourselves at the end of the week stating that the XT5 had "no downsides." It handles well—smooth, firm, comfortable, tight-turning—and, as noted, is remarkably spacious.

The middle model in any lineup—size, price, perhaps powertrain or features—could be a compromise of everything above or below, or it could be a perfect synthesis of the best of the full range. The Cadillac XT5 is surely the latter.

For the luxury panache, premium styling and attributes of Cadillac without the in-your-face showiness (or bulk) of an Escalade, with a cabin that feels full-size despite its midsize rating, all at a cost well lower than imports many people would be likely to cross-shop, this XT5 may well fill the bill.

Its price compares dramatically with a similarly outfitted Escalade at \$88,495, although that does bear a 420-hp 6.2-liter V8. (Then again, this XT5's V6 is rated at 26 mpg highway to the V8 Escalade's 20 mpg; then again, Escalade offers a 3.0L diesel rated at 27 mpg.)

The Cadillac XT5 offers a fine package within any set of variables. Our Premium Luxury model, outfitted in our case with the V6 and AWD, with enough performance for most people, surely hits a sweet spot within the XT family.

Tough choices or easy choices? Nice choices. ■



Cadillac SUVs include XT4, 5 and 6, paralleling the CT4, 5 and 6 sedans—basically a classic ascending set of compact, midsize and full-size (with Escalade, of course, bigger still). Size categories and terms increasingly blur these days, so best advice? Just try 'em on for size.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....(optional) 3.6L V6 24v DOHC VVT dir inj, alum block w cast-in-place iron bore liners, alum heads.
HP/TORQUE	.....310 hp / 271 lb-ft (standard: 2.0L I-4 turbo, 237 hp / 258 lbft)
DRIVETRAIN	.....(standard FWD) AWD
TRANSMISSION	.....Hydra-Matic 9-spd auto
SUSPENSION	...F: MacPherson strut w direct-acting hollow stblzr bar; R: indep five-link, specifically tuned coils, hollow stblzr bar
STEERING	.....variable-assist rack & pinion w rack-mounted belt-driven elec assist
BRAKES	.....disc: F: 13.6; R: 12.4
WHEELS	.....(Prem Lux) std 18", opt 20"
TIRES	.....(Prem Lux w opt 20") P235/55R20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....189.6 / 112.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....7.9 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.7 / 38.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.2 / 39.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....30.2 / 63 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3915 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(with pkg) 3500 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....(FWD 19.4) AWD 21.7 gal
MPG	.....18/26/21 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$50,795
ENGINE: 3.6L V6 DI VVT w auto start/stop	.....1000
DARK MOON BLUE METALLIC	.....625
PLATINUM PKG: semi-aniline leather, leather instrument panel-console-door trim, micro-fiber suede headliner, prem carpeted floor mats, real-time damping performance suspension w modes, illum door sill	.....4850
ENHANCED VISIBILITY & TECH PKG: HD surround vision, rear pedestrian alert, rear camera mirror w washer, 8" color gauge cluster w personalization, colors heads-up display, auto park assist w braking	.....2275
NIGHT VISION	.....2000
WHEELS: 20" six-split-spoke alloy w polished/android finish	.....1700
DRIVER ASSIST PKG: adaptive cruise, enhanced auto emergency brake, reverse auto brake, auto seat belt tightening	.....1300
COMFORT & AIR QUALITY PKG: tri-zone climate, air ionizer, ventilated front seats, heated outboard rear seats	.....1200
CADILLAC USER EXPERIENCE w embedded nav, Bose performance 14-sprkr audio	.....1025
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$67,765

