

Avalon - Great Interior And Plenty Of Smart Tech

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just as many toys in here, too. Want heated and cooled seats? It has that. Want a heated steering wheel? It has that too. How about a comprehensive infotainment system with a premium JBL audio system? Yup, it has all that.

It is also the first Toyota branded vehicle I have tested that has a head-up display system, and it is a good one which offers speed and navigation information. So, be in no doubt, this Toyota is every bit as luxurious as a Lexus.

Powertrain: Unlike the Toyota Camry or the Lexus ES, the Avalon is only available with one powertrain in Canada. Under the hood lies a 3.5L V6 that boasts 24 valves, and clears its throat through a stainless steel exhaust system.

Max power output is 301 hp (produced at 6600 rpm), and 267 lb-ft of torque (delivered at 4700 rpm). Power is fed to just the front wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission. So, the Avalon has ample power, but given its curb weight of 1686 kg, it was never going to be a sprinter! Still, with a 0 to 100 km/h acceleration time of about 8.0 seconds, it is fairly quick for a vehicle like

this.

Driving Dynamics: If you're looking for a large, luxury car that is also as sharp as a scalpel in terms of driving dynamics, than look elsewhere.

The Avalon was never about being the type of family car that can also annoy sports cars on a twisty road – no, it's main purpose is to cover ground smoothly and comfortably, and that it does. On the highway, just engage its smart cruise control, along with lane keep assist, and it'll do most of the work for you, so you can relax as you cover distances. The Avalon is like a de-stresser, doing its all to make your commute pleasant! I only wish, it had massaging seats, because that would than really not leave anything else to be desired.

Any complaints about the way it drives? Well, I wish the steering gave more feedback as to what the front tires are doing, and my tester had a weird vibration at highway speeds – which I hope was an isolated issue with this tester and not representative of all new Avalon units.

Fuel Economy: In my test cycle (170 km of highway driving + 130 km of city driving), the 2019



Avalon, during a very cold week, averaged 10.4 L/100 km – which is very good for a vehicle of this size. So, it won't break your bank

to drive one.

Pricing: Base pricing for the 2019 Toyota Avalon starts from \$42,790. While not cheap, it isn't

extremely expensive either, especially when you look at the size of the vehicle and the luxury features you get.

Verdict: The latest Toyota Avalon has a wonderful interior, plenty of tech -along with Toyota Safety Sense, to keep you safe out on the road- and is a spacious, comfortable sedan. In short, it is a Lexus in a Toyota badge!

It might not be the prettiest thing out on the road, nor is it the most engaging to drive; but for the mature clients that typically buys an Avalon, it delivers on qualities that suit their needs, and given that it's a Toyota, it'll run forever.

'People Still Like To Drive' Message To Auto Industry

TORONTO; Speaking to a room full of key Canadian automotive industry influencers, Larry Hutchinson, President & CEO at Toyota Canada Inc., claimed that, in its race toward fully autonomous vehicles, the industry may have forgotten one very important truth: People still like to drive.

"I believe our industry is at a crucial fork in the road," Hutchinson said. "We're on the cusp of an important evolution in transportation."

Even as vehicles are becoming increasingly electrified and auto-

mated, most consumers still enjoy driving. To Toyota, the two are not mutually exclusive. The company believes drivers want to be engaged - and that they want a vehicle that reflects their lifestyle and personality. If the auto industry ignores this, Hutchinson warns, they do so at their peril.

"Why have so many automakers lost their passion for driving," he asked. "They seem to be so focused on the 'next big thing' - on the self-driving electric pod – they're forgetting that driving is fun." He noted that, when you look at the concept ve-

hicles of the future, you'll often see a bland, autonomous pod that replaces the steering wheel with a computer screen and a pillow.

"It's very easy to get caught up in a vision of a radically different model of mobility," Hutchinson said. "A future where personal use vehicles give way to shared transportation devices that will autonomously ferry people and goods from place to place."

In this vision, Hutchinson lamented, people are lifelessly staring at screens while their mode of transportation takes them where they want to go.

"The proposition that, given a choice, people would prefer to be idle occupants of a pod... that's not Toyota's vision... not even close," he said. "As other automakers are working on vehicles that drive themselves - turning us into passive passengers - we're incorporating advanced automated safety technologies in ways that enhance, rather than deaden, the driving experience."

Instead of replacing the driver behind the wheel, Toyota's Guardian approach is a teamwork concept that sees advanced automated safety technologies act as

their personal co-pilot, enhancing their awareness and control of the vehicle, and helping them be a better driver.

Hutchinson believes that, in the future, cars will be more fun to drive, not less so, and emphasized that Toyota's recent approach has been to build better, more exciting vehicles for people who love to drive.

"Lots of people will tell you the future of mobility is one of robotic, shared use vehicles... of autonomous pods and anonymous pod people," he stated. "I don't believe in pods." - CNW

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