

anonymous by Joe Sage

Don't be surprised if people literally walk around to the back of your new Outlander to read the nameplate and find out what it is. This happened to us several times, including among automotive cognoscenti. It may be the vehicle's generally welcome restyling—gone is the gaping grille of the prior generation, shared among others in the Mitsubishi lineup. But gone with that may be a recognition factor.

The Outlander has indeed been recognized in other ways. About the same time we were driving this, it received the 2014 Kelley Blue Book 5-Year Cost to Own Award for Mid-Size SUV/Crossover, presented to vehicles and brands (luxury and non-luxury) with the lowest projected cost of ownership based upon KBB's data over an initial five-year ownership period, using vehicle depreciation, repair and maintenance costs, anticipated fuel costs, finance and insurance fees, and state fees. It also received the Automotive Science Group's Best 5 All-Around Performance Award for the mid-size SUV class, for a formula of combined environmental, economic

and "social performance" scores.

This kind of value starts with the purchase price, and a front-wheel-drive ES entry model starts at just \$22,995. Our GT model—with the same engine but AWD—started at just \$27,795, quite competitive for a top-of-the-line seven-passenger SUV. Our test vehicle came with only one option package. This significantly changes the mental image of its bottom line, and we would happily do without about half of it. If we could get just the audio—and maybe the nav, at least for resale value—for about half of the GT Touring Package's \$6100 price tag, we'd be happy.

If you've seen clips from earlier Saturday Night Live episodes, you may remember comedian Al Franken doing his Daily Affirmation with Stuart Smalley bit. The fabricated self-help guru would say, "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and, doggone it, people like me." This came back to us during our week with the Mitsubishi Outlander. It's appealing enough, it's affordable enough, it's economical enough, it has decent utility and darn it, people like it. Or they could. ■



We had driven the Outlander at an off-road event in the Cascades last year. The Outlander did well in its class, but was underpowered for its price (166 hp against 240 to 290 for any of the others). Subaru Forester won. We gave the Mitsubishi an editorial nod as most improved.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE3.0L SOHC V6 MIVEC
 POWER166 hp, 162 lb-ft torque
 TRANSMISSION6-spd Sportronic auto
 DRIVETRAINSuper All-Wheel Control 4WD
 CAPACITY7 passengers
 MPG20/28/23 (city/hwy/comb)
INCLUDED: Super-wide HID headlamps, auto headlamps, foglights, heated side mirrors w turn signals, roof carrier plug-in prep, rain-sensing wipers, rear window wiper, 18-inch alloy wheels, color LCD display, automatic climate, tilt/telescope wheel, 6.1" touchscreen audio, 140-watt audio, rear camera, Fast-key entry, pushbutton start, power locks, underfloor cargo.

BASE PRICE\$27,795

OPTIONS: GT TOURING PACKAGE: Navigation with 7" touchscreen, real time traffic, 3D mapping, 2 map updates, lane departure warning, forward collision mitigation, adaptive cruise, power tilt/slide glass sunroof, leather seat surfaces, 710-watt Rockford Fosgate audio, power driver's seat, power remote tailgate\$6100

DESTINATION CHARGE825

TOTAL\$34,720



LOGBOOK NOTES

It has heated power seats and power pretty much everything else—mirrors, locks, keyless, nice multipurpose touchscreen. With power tilt/telescope, it could be complete.

It does have an old-fashioned mechanical cable hand-grip handbrake, which we like.

The shift lever is just too short. We have long arms, and it's a reach. It's okay, but we wish it were an inch and a half longer.

We had numerous complaints noted about the power liftgate—from its controls and construction to its performance—which only got moreso as the week wore on.

If you jockey back and forth between the Eco button and separately the S-AWC button, you can do various combinations for optimum (available) fuel economy and performance. The controls, however, are separate from each other, as well as from lane departure and collision warning controls—oddly arranged and oddly grouped.

