

Gained in translation BY JOE SAGE

The Acura RDX almost needs no introduction, arriving as it does on the coattails of the Acura MDX, the best-selling vehicle ever in the Acura lineup and the best-selling three-row luxury SUV of all time. Surprising? Sort of, until you remind yourself of the two qualifiers—three-row and luxury. It's still impressive.

The MDX has been around since the turn of the millennium, before the crossover craze began. It just entered its third generation in 2014, though you would be forgiven for hardly noticing the gen-to-gen evolutionary changes at a glance. MDX shares its platform with the Honda Pilot (a new generation of which is also reviewed in this issue). A next-gen 2017 MDX will be revealed at the New York International Auto Show toward the end of March (see *Auto News Update*). Gone will be the chrome bucktooth grille (hooray), as also noted on the Acura Precision concept (see Detroit Auto Show highlights elsewhere in this issue).

Acura three-letter names and timeline evolutions require more memorization than logic, but there are just two SUVs, and this RDX is the small-

er of the two, a five-seater to MDX's seven, arriving later (2007, revised in 2013, facelifted in 2010 and 2016). For reasons of the grille alone, we might anticipate another facelift, sooner than later.

The decision points, RDX vs MDX, may seem simple and obvious, but not quite. The basic engine specs (3.5L V6) match, though with a higher compression ratio the MDX ekes out 11 more horsepower. RDX tows 1500 pounds, MDX 3500. MDX weighs 322 pounds more, with its nine inches of extra length and third row of seats. One surprise: the bigger MDX actually has a tighter turning circle, just by two-tenths of a foot, but still unexpected. Fuel economy is near identical.

As with all Honda-Acura vehicles, you don't have to sweat a complex options game, although a wide range of packages-as-models makes for price overlap between RDX and MDX.

Blue-black against black-black gauges were hard to read, locks fought back, as did the liftgate, and the keyfob felt as big as a portable hard drive, but overall we had a great week with the RDX. We were happy it had a conventional shifter, not

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE / DRIVETRAIN	.....3.5L i-VTEC 24v V6 / AWD
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE	.....279 hp / 252 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd automatic, paddle shifters
SEATING CAPACITY	.....5 passengers
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.9 ft
WEIGHT	.....3946 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....1500 lb
MPG	.....(6-spd AWD) 19/28/22 city/hwy/comb
CARGO VOLUME	.....behind 2nd row: 26.1 cu.ft.
	.....behind 1st row: 61.3-76.9 cu.ft.
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....184.4 in / 105.7 in

BASE PRICE (ADVANCE PKG).....**\$43,520**

TECH PACKAGE: nav w/voice recognition, multi-angle rear camera w/guides, real-time traffic, 10-spkr surround sound, touchscreen, hard drive, blind spot info, rear cross traffic monitor, dual-zone climate w/air filterincl

ADVANCE PACKAGE: remote start, parking sensors, vented front seats, auto-dim side mirrors, fog lights, rain sensing wipersincl

ACURAWATCH PLUS PACKAGE: lane keep, color meter display screen, collision mitigation, adaptive cruise, lane departure warningincl

DESTINATION CHARGE:940

TOTAL.....**\$44,460**

the child's-educational-toy square-round-push-pull button complex some Hondas or Acuras have.

Unless you actively need seven seats or more towing capacity, the RDX is a well-executed new translation of a top-selling vehicle. ■

Our Acura RDX came in Basque Red Pearl II paint, making us notice that the burgundy to brick red color range overall seems to currently be widely popular with many brands.

