

Epiphany

by Joe Sage

Meet the new boss: popular vanilla receives a healthy dose of hot sauce

Honda CR-V comes to bat with a very impressive stat: among compact crossovers—the largest-selling segment of all—it is the number one seller in the US, at almost 360,000 units last year. CR-V has been the best-selling SUV in America for 20 years, with over 4 million sold to date.

Buyers seek purchase and operating economy, utility and high reliability. Honda comes to mind due to a long reputation of infallibility, though the playing field has leveled over time. Buyers also like Honda's simple trim levels and pricing system.

We certainly see the Honda CR-V on the road in great numbers, though we had never found it particularly stimulating. Our first hint that something had changed came when a good friend, a Harley-riding global rock star, said he was thinking of getting one. Granted, he was inspired by his sister having just bought one, and his wife will drive it, too, but they're both just as cool.

Our next hint was when our CR-V arrived. So used to seeing these in silver, we found this one's

Obsidian Blue Pearl stunning. Though familiar overall, dramatic changes in lighting, sheet metal and a particularly sexy set of wheels caught our eye. The interior is a handsome light grey leather on this line-topping Touring trim, with tasteful wood-grain inserts in the door panels and dash.

This is the fifth-generation CR-V, completely reengineered inside and out with more space, better aerodynamics even with its sharp new looks, more premium finishes, a complete suite of driver assist technologies, enhanced entertainment and connectivity, new body structure for improved handling and cabin tranquility, a hands-free power liftgate and CR-V's first turbo powerplant.

The vehicle again has a CVT, though G-Design shift logic mitigates both feel and power, via stepped ratios during acceleration. Most people never know they even have a CVT, but those who do should notice the improvement.

We found the lane keep function overly sensitive and over-corrective, as many are, but it can be easily turned off.

The new Honda CR-V remains immediately recognizable, yet is also immediately recognizable as being all new. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.5L inline-4 turbo
DRIVETRAIN	Real Time AWD w/Intelligent Control
HP/TORQUE	190 hp / 179 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	CVT w/sport mode
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson, 23mm tub stblzr bar; R: multilink double wishbone, 13mm solid stblzr bar
STEERING	variable ratio elec power rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 11.1" vented / R: 10.2" solid discs
WHEELS/TIRES	18" alloy / 235/60 R18
LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR	180.6" / 104.7" / 8.2"
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	20.8° / 24.8°
WEIGHT	3512 lb
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION (F/R)	57% / 43%
TOW CAPACITY	1500 lb
CARGO CAPACITY	37.6 / 75.8 cu.ft
FUEL CAPACITY	14.0 gal
MPG	27/33/29 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$33,695
DESTINATION CHARGE	.900
TOTAL	\$34,595

