

# Clean sweep by Joe Sage

When we traveled to San Antonio earlier this year for the new Kia Niro's launch drive, its designer Michael Torpey, who had also penned the original Kia Soul sketches, told us, "There's a lot to love about hybrids, but not their styling." For Kia Niro, he was given a new broom and a blank slate. We love the results. Hybrid drivetrains have been around long enough that they don't need to be stylistically celebrated for their own sake. The Kia Niro's fresh, clean design that simply states its efficiency and purpose, with no pretenses or stigma, works wonders. Kia VP of product planning Orth Hedrick affirms that the Niro is "like low-fat ice cream, not miserable no-fat ice cream." Crisp and lean, the Kia Niro looks ready to gobble up any task in a lighthearted way—and proves to be so.

We received our new Niro at the airport late at night, popped the shifter into Sport (139 hp did not sound like a lot) and headed home. Within just a few miles, our logbook messages set their tone for the week: "We like this! This is a perfect little car, and holycow—its gets 46 miles per gallon, too?" Forget the horsepower—this little hybrid's electric

motor more than doubles the grunt of its gasoline engine, together delivering 195 lb-ft of torque—at 3274 pounds putting your drive experience into near sports car territory. Step on the pedal, power through your first curve, and you'll be hooked.

A hybrid fan will find much to love here, but the real magic may be for non-hybrid fans. If you've only kind of thought about hybrids, maybe even turned your nose up at them, or hadn't followed recent developments, you may not know this is a hybrid when you see it (it bears only a discreet badge), and when you drive it, you may not even believe it. It's not what people have come to expect from a hybrid, and it's likely to change your whole thinking, right out of the chute. The market has responded, with sales off to a brisk start.

The cabin provided outstanding acoustics for an 8-speaker-plus-subwoofer Harman Kardon audio system with Clari-Fi technology, and the UVO 8-inch touchscreen interface is clean and effective.

We pushed the Kia Niro constantly, simply because that's the most fun. The car has a firm ride with great road feel and handling. Yet at the end of an exuberant full week with the car, we had consumed only a quarter tank of gas. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>ENGINE</b> .....	1.6L GDI 4-cyl 16v Atkinson cycle w/ 43hp AC synchr perm magnet 240v elec motor
<b>BATTERY</b> .....	1.56 kWh lithium-ion polymer 240v 6.5Ah
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b> .....	FWD, idle stop and go (ISG)
<b>HP/TORQUE</b> .....	engine: 104 hp / 109 lb-ft elec motor: 43 hp / 125 lb-ft combined system: 139 hp / 195 lb-ft
<b>TRANSMISSION</b> .....	6-speed dual clutch dry multi-plate hydraulically actuated
<b>SUSPENSION</b> .....	F: indep MacPherson struts, stblzr, gas shocks; R: indep multi-link, twin tube shocks
<b>STEERING</b> .....	motor driven power steering
<b>BRAKES</b> .....	vented front, solid rear, AHB active hydraulic boost, w/ motor polarity reversal regenerative braking
<b>WHEELS/TIRES</b> .....	18-in alloy / P225/45R18
<b>LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR</b> .....	171.5" / 106.3" / 6.3"
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b> .....	34.8 ft
<b>WEIGHT</b> .....	3274 lb
<b>LUGGAGE CAPACITY</b> .....	19.4 / 54.5 cu.ft.
<b>FUEL CAPACITY / DRIVING RANGE</b> .....	11.9 gal / 511 miles
<b>MPG</b> .....	46/40/43 (city/hwy/comb)

<b>BASE PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$29,650</b>
<b>INCLUDES:</b> Dual-zone auto climate w/rear vents, Harman Kardon premium audio, 8" touchscreen w/nav & rear camera, UVO eServices, Android/Apple, leather seat trim, Bluetooth, heated/vented front seats, heated wheel w/controls, power driver's seat w/lumbar & memory, keyless entry/start, blind spot detection, front/rear park assist, rear cross traffic alert, projector beam headlights, LED positioning lamps and DRLs, power sunroof, power folding mirrors/signals, roof rails, rear spoiler, privacy glass, 10 yr 10,000 mile warranty.....	incl
<b>SNOW WHITE PEARL PAINT</b> .....	395
<b>ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE:</b> HID headlights, autonomous emergency braking, forward collision warning system, lane departure warning system, smart cruise control, 115v inverter, wireless phone charging.....	1900
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b> .....	895
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$32,840</b>



*In its first few months of life, the new Kia Niro has already won the prestigious JD Power Automotive Performance, Execution and Layout (APEAL) award for its segment (Small SUV). Kia is the only non-premium brand to earn three segment wins in this year's study.*

