

Foundation

BY JOE SAGE

Subaru Impreza is at the heart of a complex ecosystem. Its platform is the foundation of the Impreza lineup itself, as well as the turbo-charged WRX and high-steroid WRX STI, high-bodied Forester and raised-chassis Crosstrek.

The WRX STI hot sedan gets a lot of buzz, with its rally wins around the world, but for a wider audience, there's the basic Impreza, in and of itself a complete family of 12 vehicles—one model as extensive as some brands' entire lineups.

The fifth-generation Impreza, new for 2017, uses a new global platform soon to spread across other models. Four trim levels have CVT, two also offering a 5-speed manual—that's six models—times two, as each is available as a sedan or five-door (for \$500 more). The base model is \$18,395. This five-door Premium is the second-up-the-scale trim. Above that are Sport and then Limited. Premium and Limited are CVT-only, leaving manual fans with the base model or third-up-the-chain Sport.

Packages are kept simple—from none to three per trim, depending what's already added at each level. Our sample with top package, still with man-

ual cloth seats and without keyless entry/start, is within \$505 of a top-trim Limited, which at \$24,095 can still be optioned up with moonroof, driver assist tech and Harman Kardon audio (\$3845 more gets you everything). You trade off some fuel mileage as features increase, but all are close: mid-to-upper 30s highway. This model-feature-price overlap may make your decision hard or very easy, depending.

Our sample's 6.5-inch touchscreen was effective, and though our gut says we'd want the Harman Kardon audio, the standard unit was better than expected, with clean, clear bass. We regretted lack of keyless entry/start. For \$1600, you can move from Premium to Sport, CVT-for-CVT, or for \$800, you can move to Sport with a 5-speed stick, a win-win for manual lovers. That's the end of the line for hand-shifters: top Limited trim is CVT-only.

Performance was strong for its horses and CVT, with faux shift points well implemented for confident freeway lane grabs. The car has a refreshing purity: steering is tight and responsive.

The Impreza's new global platform will be applied next to Crosstrek, WRX, WRX STI and Forester. Legacy and Outback will adapt it in a couple of years. Joining Legacy and Crosstrek, the new Impreza is now built at Subaru's Indiana plant. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L Boxer hzntly-opposed alum 4-cylinder
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
HP/TORQUE	152 hp / 145 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	Lineartronic CVT w 7-sp manual mode
SUSPENSION	4-wheel indep, StablEX dampers, anti-dive front & anti-lift rear geometry; F: MacPherson-type, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar; R: dbl wishbone, pillow ball-joint mnt, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	quick-ratio elec assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 10.9 2-piston vented / R: 10.8 solid discs
WHEELS/TIRES	16x6.5 alum alloy / 205/55R16 89V AS
LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR	175.6" / 105.1" / 5.1"
LEGROOM	(F/R) 43.1" / 36.5"
CARGO CAPACITY	20.8 / 55.3 cu.ft
TURNING CIRCLE	35.4 ft
WEIGHT	3135 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	13.2 gal
MPG	28/37/31 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE \$21,695

INCLUDES: STARLINK 6.5" multimedia system w 6.5" multi-touch high-res display, 6 speakers, AM/FM, Apple/Android, Aha™, Pandora®, Bluetooth® hands-free phone, audio streaming; high grade multi-function display; all-weather package incl 2-stage heated front seats, heated mirrors, wiper de-icer, body-color folding mirrors, lighted power windows switches, keyless entry, roof rails, sound insulated windshield.....incl

CODE 15 PACKAGE: EyeSight® driver assist tech incl adaptive cruise control, automatic pre-collision braking, lane departure & sway warning, lane keep assist; also incl blind spot detection w lane change assist & rear cross traffic alert; plus steering responsive fog lights; plus power moonroof.....2395

DESTINATION CHARGE820

TOTAL **\$24,910**

