

Nicely done.

by Joe Sage

A quick refresher: Genesis and Equus used to be Hyundai models (though neither bore a Hyundai badge) and had their own subset dealer sales and service experience to pamper their premium/luxury customers. All rear-drivers (in some cases with optional all-wheel-drive), models included a full-size Genesis Sedan, a sporty two-door Genesis Coupe that appeared unrelated but shared the Sedan's bones, and the big Equus limousine-sedan. In late 2015, Genesis announced it would become a standalone brand (under the greater Hyundai umbrella).

The prior (Hyundai) Genesis Sedan became the new Genesis G80, and the prior (Hyundai) Equus became the new Genesis G90. The prior Genesis Coupe has departed, and a new Genesis G70 four-door coupe GT will be revealed shortly (already easily found online in spy form). For now, the Genesis dealer experience takes largely the same subset approach (which spreads the smaller-volume luxury brand across more locations).

It's a smooth transition. The vehicles are familiar; only the small-volume Equus went through a total name change; the combined Genesis name raises brand awareness across the board; and its premium image is strengthened for existing as well as new and future customers.

If you're familiar with Hyundai vehicles, as millions are, you'll find the move upscale to Genesis comfortably easy: seats, mirrors, feature set-up, screen interface and such are straight evolutions of what you already know. Added are carefully crafted premium elements and customization options, such as a heads-up display that can be projected in white,

orange or green as conditions vary. The electronic shifter addresses a current common pitfall of many, with top lever position R illuminated in red, to mitigate confusion with Park via a button above.

Details include a console bin with long-life LED interior lighting (but an ill-fitting tray). The headlight stalk could use backlighting—we needed our phone to find it and turn the lights on. High beams are strong, but low beams are not. The electronic shifter is very sensitive, twice popping into neutral with a brush of the hand while driving. The Koreans excel at continuous improvement, so we'd not be surprised if these things have already been fixed.

Quantum Logic premium audio from Harman Kardon (with ClariFi bit-rate restoration) is powerful and clean ("mind-blowingly good," per our logbook), with multiple modes including audience or stage (nice for those of us who used to perform).

Sport was our favorite drive mode, typically for us, but it also improved low-speed handling, which was needed. The transmission exhibits exceptional presence and strength—smooth, powerful and frugal as it bursts quickly through the first three or four gears with a subtle powertrain growl.

There are three Genesis G80 models, and they intertwine considerably. All are now available as either rear-drivers or with AWD (you used to have to

make an engine/drivetrain tradeoff decision). Suspension and steering use the same layout on all, though the AWD turning circle is slightly larger.

Engines include a 3.8L V6, a 5.0L V8 and the G80 Sport's 3.3L twin turbo V6. Respective horsepower is 311, 420 or 365 (with premium fuel on the V8 and the twin turbo, though they can run on regular with fewer horses). Torque on the V8 and twin turbo V6 Sport is close to identical (and the Sport is 42 pounds lighter). Fuel mileage is also a point or two better for the twin turbo Sport than the V8.

Price for the base V6 is in the low to mid \$40s (RWD or AWD). The tougher choice is between the V8 and the twin turbo V6 Sport, both in the mid to upper \$50s, overlapping between the AWD Sport and RWD V8. Between the two upper models, you are largely free to make your decision based on how you like the particular handling and performance of either, with budget secondary.

We came to the G80 Sport straight out of a hot little sport coupe, and this big sedan with full-size cabin comfort quickly put the other in our rear view mirror. Twin turbo acceleration is smooth and strong, and its AWD grip and focused tracking run with the best when powering through a city corner, freeway sweeper or country highway curve. The Genesis G80 Sport delivers a finely engineered balance of nimble performance that used to be found only in European autobahn scorchers. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....3.3L twin turbo DOHC 24v V6 w D-CVVT
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD (AWD available)
HP/TORQUE	.....365 hp / 376 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd electronic auto, Shiftronic man
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep 5-link w high-perf gas shocks, hollow stblzr bar; R: indep 5-link w high-perf gas shocks, solid stblzr bar
STEERING	.....rack-mount motor driven elec PS, variable
BRAKES	.....F: 14.2" vented disc, four-piston R: 13.0" vented disc, single floating piston
WHEELS/TIRES	.....F: 19x8.5J / P245/40R19 A/S R: 19x9.0J / P275/35R19 A/S
LENGTH / WB / GRND CLEAR	.....196.5 / 118.5 / 5.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(RWD) 36.2 ft
WEIGHT	.....4519 lb
LUGGAGE CAPACITY	.....15.3 cu.ft.
FUEL CAPACITY	.....20.3 gal
MPG	.....17/25/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE\$55,250

EVERYTHING INCLUDED: vehicle stability, ESC, ABS, brake assist, traction control, auto emergency brake w pedestrian detect, driver attn alert, blind spot, rear cross traffic, lane keep assist, smart cruise w stop/start, multi-view camera, front/rear park sensors, electronic park brake w vehicle hold, rain sense wipers, auto defogger, paddle shifters, sport suspension w intelligent drive mode, dark chrome quad sport exhaust tips, 19" sport alloys, carbon fiber & alum int trim, power tilt/slide pano roof, auto heads w high beam assist, LED heads, LED DRLs, premium leather, suede headliner, 16-/12-way power front seats, heated/vented front seats, dual zone climate, color heads-up display, auto dim mirror w compass, 7" color multi-info display, 9.2" touchscreen navi/HD, Android/Apple, Lexicon 17-spkr audio w ClariFi, wireless charge pad, power rear & manual rear side sunshades, hands-free smart power trunk lid, much moreall incl

DESTINATION CHARGE975

TOTAL\$56,225

The Genesis G80 Sport makes its position among three Genesis G80 models clear with its performance-oriented style points and a tight, high-torque twin turbo V6.



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