

Instant winner.

BY JOE SAGE

What do you get when you set out to create a new car that can economically take on anything from a BMW to a Porsche Panamera? What if it's from a company that's never built such a thing before? If the company is Kia, you expect great things, as they've proven time and again—with both sales and product variety growing exponentially—that they can do anything they set their minds to. Case in point: the Kia Stinger.

With four doors, available with both 4- or 6-cylinder turbos (255 or 365-hp), rear- or all-wheel drive, and starting at \$31,900, Stinger can be compared to many things, from the German and Asian premium performance brands they autocrossed Stinger against at media and consumer events (it beats a V6 Panamera in the 0-to-60), to, say, a Charger SRT, based on Kia's economy-minded roots. This car can compete with any number of others. Or is it in a world of its own? You get to decide.

One thing we inevitably learn in a weeklong drive is what kind of self-comparative fellow travelers will come out of the woodwork, unprompted. Vehicles aggressively tailgating and challenging us

included many BMWs, an aggressive Z-car, a few VW GTIs, an Audi SQ5 and a Ford SVT Lightning pickup, as well as a couple of old Honda Civics and an older Ford Escape. A Kia Sportage tagged along for quite some time, probably out of sibling curiosity. Both the awareness of this all-new car and its competitive set self-define as broad and deep.

We put a lot of miles on the Stinger. The transmission is so well-spaced and responsive, we didn't even think of going to the paddles for some time, then did as traffic got thicker and we needed to grab tight spots readily. Either way, we enjoyed a great deal of power and control, proof that even this four-cylinder version can deliver the full pride and promise of the new Stinger brand.

It was good to have so much recognition, as the production Stinger's styling had struck us as much tamer than the GT4 Stinger concept show car that preceded it. But we had a race commentator step up in the ISM Raceway parking lot, not knowing what it was yet, but sure it was something special. We had a Dubai-caliber gold-and-silver-plated geometric-camo high-dollar Mercedes-Benz sedan stop cold in traffic coming the other way, the driver punch his fist in the air and yell, "Yeah! Kia Stinger!" And many other thumbs-ups. Clearly, the

SPECIFICATIONS: KIA STINGER 2.0T

ENGINE	.....2.0T twin scroll turbo 16v 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	.....255 hp / 260 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD (AWD available)
TRANSMISSION	.....8-speed auto w paddle shift
ACCEL 0-TO-60	.....5.9 sec
STEERING	.....electric rack & pinion / constant
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson, R: Multi Link; gas shocks
BRAKES	.....F 12.6 single-piston vented disc, .....R 12.4 single-piston solid disc
WHEELS/TIRES (F/R)	.....8.0Jx18 alloy / P225/45R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....190.2 / 114.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....23.3 cu.ft / 40.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3611 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	.....prem rec / 15.9 gal
MPG	.....22/29/25 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (2.0T) \$31,900

INCL: Drive modes, leather interior, 8-way/6-way pwr front seats (heated), 7-in touchscreen, Android/iOS, rear camera, Bluetooth, SiriusXM, auto-dim mirror, keyless entry/start, 60/40 rear seats, dual zone auto climate w 2nd row vents, front/rear park sensors, ESC, traction control, acoustic glass and more.

ADVANCED DRIVER ASSISTANCE PACKAGE2000
DESTINATION CHARGE900

TOTAL \$34,800

model has taken on a high degree of buzz very quickly and completely.

Put it all together, and it seems the Kia Stinger can compete successfully in the marketplace with premium performance imports, domestic muscle cars and, well, certainly any other \$31,000 cars. ■

Nice on the ice.

BY DAVE STALL

Did you know that a guy from San Diego knows how to drive in the snow? You can stop laughing now, just as you won't laugh when you find out that the folks at Kia have created an incredible sporty four-door sedan with a 365-horsepower 3.3-liter V6 under the hood. Hit 0-to-60 mph in 4.7 seconds. With its 376 lb-ft of torque backed by an 8-speed paddle-shifting automatic, the Stinger GT will give you performance found in much more expensive cars. Top speed is 167, best in class.

Here's the bottom line. I have driven many a car on streets and tracks, but in a side-by-side drive, Stinger easily out-handled its competition: BMW, Infiniti, Porsche Panamera—a huge job well done by the Kia performance team, lifted from the Germans, who have put the spark in the Stinger GT.

You can't help but like the aircraft-inspired cockpit's great gauge layout designed with the driver in mind. It has all the creature comforts city road warriors need: USB ports, heated seats, navigation and a slew of safety features. But this isn't about the car in town or an autocross slalom. It is about putting a Kia Stinger GT AWD to the test in the snow. The last time I drove in the snow was in Korea

in the US Army driving a 10-ton tow truck—nothing like driving a Stinger on the freeways of Southern California. Kia must have thought the same thing, so they brought me to Crested Butte, Colorado and, with the help of an amazing track prep crew, built an ice race track—not a circle, but a six-turn road course. Then they put me on the snow course in a bone stock Kia Stinger with street tires. Look ma, no studs!

The AWD Stinger on ice and snow benefits immediately from its rear-drive basis and the car's long wheelbase (which resists spinning), an attribute that also delivers its spacious cabin. The car's electronically-controlled dynamic torque vectoring system monitors driver inputs and road conditions and automatically applies power and braking force to the appropriate wheels—between front and rear, and side-to-side—to help maintain course in a full range of adverse conditions. If there is slippage, power is seamlessly redirected—up to 50 percent to the front wheels, and in Sport mode up to 80 percent to the rear wheels.

If you live in snow country, this car is for you. Once I went around the course a few times, I became very comfortable what the Kia Stinger GT would do in all weather circumstances and challenges. As the day went on, the sun came out and started to melt the track a little, which gave us a

SPECIFICATIONS: KIA STINGER GT 3.3T

ENGINE	.....3.3T twin turbo 24v V6
HP/TORQUE	.....365 hp / 376 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD (RWD available)
TRANSMISSION	.....8-speed auto w paddle shift
ACCEL 0-TO-60	.....4.7 sec
STEERING	.....electric rack & pinion / variable
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut; .....R: Multi Link; gas or electric shocks
BRAKES	.....F: Brembo 4-piston 13.8 vented disc.....R: Brembo 2-piston 13.4 vented disc
WHEELS	.....F 8.0Jx19; R 8.5Jx19
TIRES	.....F P225/40R19; R P255/35R19 (optional for AWD: 8.0Jx18, P225/45R18)
WEIGHT	.....4023 lb
MPG	.....19/25/21 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (GT 3.3T w/ AWD) \$40,550

different surface to deal with. Slushies, anyone? Slush was no issue at all for the Stinger. It was as if the car knew what we were trying to do and controlled the situation to the max.

If grading it, I would give the Stinger 10 out of 10 for handling. Whether you think you need it or not, opt for the AWD. If nothing else, it is an added value when you sell or trade it in—which I doubt you'll even want to do, after discovering how Kia has raised the game in all weather conditions, no matter how much winter traveling you do.

All-wheel drive is available on all trim levels of the Stinger, 255-hp 2.0L turbo or 365-hp 3.3L turbo V6, at \$2200 on any model across the lineup. ■

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