



The Ford Mustang remains an icon.



# The Last Ones Standing: Performance Sedans and Coupes

## what drives us?

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The Savvy Drivers

We've noted before that while many coupe and sedan models have disappeared with their manufacturers opting to put their focus on SUVs and CUVs, most of the cars left standing are known for either speed or luxury, or in some cases, both.

Mustang is now the only car left in Ford's lineup and much of what its fans love about it remains the same after 50+ years. It's a powerful rear-wheel-drive sports coupe. The Mustang driven for our weekly tester was a convertible with the base EcoBoost engine and a six-speed manual transmission delivering 310 horsepower and 350 lb-ft of torque. Its Premium trim added 18-inch wheels, upgraded tires, a 12-speaker Bang & Olufsen audio system, Recaro front sport seats, and a list of convenience, tech and comfort features, adding roughly \$3K to the base price of \$37K. A driving event we attended at Texas Motor Speedway gave the opportunity to drive the 760-horsepower Shelby GT500 variant on the track. The revived Mach 1 version, just released as a 2022 model, may be the "just right" version in between the two with 480hp.

The TLX is Acura's stab at reclaiming its performance image in the luxury sports sedan segment. Our test vehicle had the turbocharged

four-cylinder engine (rated at 272 hp and 280 lb-ft of torque), Super Handling All-Wheel Drive (SH-AWD) and 10-speed automatic transmission. The 2021's new dedicated platform improved the ride and handling and its fit and finish inside was a standout in its segment. The TLX is praised for its excellent value; our top-level Advance with an MSRP of \$48K which includes much in its list of standards. While it still hits 60 in less than six seconds, TLX is criticized for its heavy weight that hinders performance slightly compared to others that it competes with.

The longer and wider fully redesigned 2021 Hyundai Elantra is still considered a compact car, but it has comparable interior space to a midsize sedan. Elantra is praised for coming with plenty of included features delivered at a competitive price with an excellent warranty. The only added feature on our top-level Limited Elantra was its carpeted floor mats, giving it a price tag of \$25,500 with the standard front-wheel-drive 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine getting 147 horsepower and 132 lb-ft of torque and connected to a continuously variable transmission, or CVT automatic. True sports enthusiasts will want to look at the Elantra N Line, still priced at a reasonable \$25,095, with a turbocharged 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine (201



2021 Hyundai Elantra NLine



Toyota Camry XSE



Lexus IS 350 AWD F Sport



Acura TLX

hp, 195 lb-ft of torque) paired to either a six-speed manual transmission or a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission. The line-topping Elantra N, expected at the end of 2021, will get a turbo-charged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine (276 hp, 289 lb-ft of torque) paired to either a six-speed manual transmission or a new eight-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission is anticipated to be priced about \$30K.

The Toyota Camry is a stand-out among midsize sedans, and its new XSE trim also adds a sportier-looking front end, sports-tuned suspension, and 19-inch alloy wheels. Our test car had the gasoline-hybrid powertrain, a modest premium that delivers greater power and fuel economy (46 MPG combined) over the standard Camry while the 2.5L 4 cylinder gas/electric engine with CVT ups the XSE's output up to 208 hp. Ours added Driver Assist and Nav packages to the base MSRP of \$32,700. These, along with the \$500 black-painted roof option and upgraded mats, added a total of about \$4K.

Lexus's newest IS 350 AWD F Sport blends comfort and luxury with sporty performance. The IS 350 is powered by a 3.5-liter V-6 engine that delivers 311 hp and 280 lb-ft of torque. Ours featured the all-wheel-drive system with a six-speed automatic gearbox which came in handy; we were very impressed with how the little sedan handled itself in last February's snow and ice. The base price on our pre-production tester was \$44,900, but ours had more than \$10K in options, including a Dynamic Handling Package with Adaptive Variable Suspension and Drive Mode Select, and adding a carbon fiber rear spoiler and 19-inch alloy black matte wheels, to put its price a little over \$55K.

Each manufacturer's coupe and sedan hold-outs remain standing for a reason. And they have fewer rivals to compare and compete against.

*Beverly and Steve Smirnits are members of the Texas Auto Writers Association and the Texas Motor Press Association, reviewing vehicles and casting their votes at driving events where the Truck of Texas, Car of Texas and Off-Road Truck of Texas are some of the titles awarded. Follow their automotive blog on [TheSavvyList.com/TheSavvyDriver](https://TheSavvyList.com/TheSavvyDriver)*