

Hyundai darts out of box with powerful, speedy 2010 Genesis coupe

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The 2010 Hyundai Genesis coupe, which came out earlier this month, is shown on a Charleston area street recently.



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The new two-door is available with a 3.8-liter V6 engine producing 306 horsepower.

For practical reasons, manufacturers tend to build car models that are available as two-door coupes and four-door sedans.

Some buyers, such as singles and couples or small families, might want a coupe since they often don't cost as much as vehicles with more doors. Others, especially larger families or people who want ease and comfort throughout, might prefer the sedan's roominess.

In most cases, shoppers are choosing between similar cars, if they are picking either a model's two door or four door versions. What's rare is for a coupe to have a radically different profile from its sedan sister.

An exception: the 2010 Hyundai Genesis coupe. It's the companion to the Hyundai Genesis sedan, a credible car in its own right that was voted 2009 North American Car of the Year by automotive journalists. But you aren't apt to get the two mixed up. The sedan is a refined family vehicle. The two-door, in contrast, is sleekly low slung with race car-like styling and two choices of engines, a 2.0-liter turbo four cylinder generating 218 horsepower and a 3.8-liter V6 churning out 306 hp.

The coupe lineup, the first variation of the all new Genesis brand, arrived early this month at Palmetto Hyundai on Rivers Avenue.

"Seeing that we had the Genesis sedan, it made sense to have a counterpart two-door model," said Paul J. Zarres, general sales manager at Palmetto Hyundai,

The 2.0-liter model starts at \$22,000 and is priced around \$25,000 with options. The limited edition 3.8-liter version starts at \$29,875 and can run with extras up to \$32,000 or so. According to Zarres, it is the lowest priced rear wheel drive car in America with more than 300 hp.

The V6 has a six-speed transmission with clutchless manual feature, paddle shifters on the steering wheel, 18 inch alloy wheels, leather seats, xenon headlights and power locks and windows standard. There's also a host of accessories and safety features, including backup warning system, anti-lock braking, electronic stability control and Bluetooth-enabled hands free phone.

The Genesis coupe likely will replace the Tiburon, which has been Hyundai's sportier model.

Zarres acknowledged that the 2010 coupe isn't a family car; the modest cargohold probably has just enough room for golf clubs. But he thinks it could be a wide buyer group, noting that men and women, young professionals and seniors, have dropped by the dealership to check out the coupes.

Attractive features include the price, which is about half the cost of the Infiniti G37, Zarres said. The coupe comes with Hyundai's Assurance Plus warranties of 10 years, 100,000 miles for the engine and related parts; five year, 60,000 miles bumper-to-bumper; and its recession-times offer where the manufacturer will make payments up to 90 days for buyers who involuntarily lose their jobs.

"You get more for less," he said.

In a recent afternoon test drive, the 3.8-liter Genesis coupe proved its need for speed. With comfortable leather seats, the wheel paddles and ample visibility, the coupe galloped between gears and rocketed along on major highways. The engine let loose a throaty rumble not that far removed from muscle car tones. For a sports car in disguise, though, the 306 hp model was steady in traffic and at slow speeds in general.

Dashboard controls were easy to use, and the sound system was fine. Clearly, Hyundai designed the coupe, which could easily get cramped with a few passengers, as the weekend thrills machine to complement the Genesis "sedan about town."

But it makes for a nice one-two punch and gives the Korean automaker a chance to sell both versions to buyers wanting both a family car and a sporty one.

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