

# 2009 Acura CSX: Dipping a Toe into Luxury

By **TITUS HSU**  
Epoch Times Staff

- 2009 Acura CSX with Technology Package
- 2.0-liter, 16-valve DOHC i-VTEC 4 cylinder engine
- 155bhp@6000rpm, 139 lb-ft@4500rpm
- Manual transmission
- 8.7/6.4 litres/100 Km (City/Hwy)
- MSRP: CDS29,900

The CSX is Acura's entry-level luxury vehicle, replacing the 1.6/1.7 EL since 2005. This vehicle is only available in Canada. The compact size and the base model MSRP of CDS26,990 places this vehicle in the upper echelon of the mainstream sub-30k car market. With a fairly complete luxury package, and the Acura brand value, it competes against other occupants of this price segment, such as, a fully-loaded Mazda 3 GT or Corolla XLR. Its strongest competition, however, may come from the Honda Si. The test vehicle

engine is designed for day-to-day driving, focusing more on delivering power at the low end. It delivers adequate acceleration for normal city driving, but at times you will find yourself pushing the 2.0-liter engine into higher rpms for more power. The good thing is that the engine will rev up smoothly and with grace, as you would expect from a Honda engine. So, even though you have to push the engine for power, the engine never sounds strained.

Being a compact sedan with a net curb weight of 2,895 lb., the car is nimble. The 5-speed manual transmission in the test vehicle adds much joy to the driving experience. The suspension is solid, and supports the car well when cornering. The car feels firmly planted on the ground, which is uncommon for a compact sedan of this class. Overall, even though the car could use more power, the handling is spirited and reassuring. The braking performance is on par with what I expect from a vehicle in this price range.

My only gripe is that both the stick shifter and the steering wheel are a bit stiff and feel somewhat rubbery. The stiffness may ease up after some mileage has been put on the car. The test car had only been driven a little more than 1,865 miles, but it definitely could have been more clean and crisp. The steering wheel feels well connected to the drive wheels, and the car responds well to the steering control, but there is an "elastic" feel to it. The steering wheel itself is of the smaller type, like in the Civic Si or Lexus IS 250. In terms of the driving experience, I don't find much difference between the smaller steering wheels and the regular ones, but my right thumb did accidentally hit the cancel button on this steering wheel a few times. The additional controls for the Technology package make the steering wheel cluttered with buttons.

The build quality is top notch. Everything feels solid. The dash panel is the same as the current non-Si Civic, with blue back-lit gauges for a futuristic look. The speedometer



2009 Acura CSX. TITUS HSU/THE EPOCH TIMES

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had the \$3,000 Technology package, which added HID headlights, Acura Navigation System with bilingual voice recognition, Bluetooth hands-free mobile phone connectivity, and a digital card reader.

The exterior is strikingly similar to that of the Civic. Most noticeable differences are in the headlights, tail lights, and the front grill. I have spoken to several Acura owners, and they generally aren't too enthusiastic about the new single-piece metallic front grill of the 2009 Acura cars. I don't think the solid-metal grill motif looks too great on the TSX or the TL either. The smaller grill on the CSX looks quite nice to me.

Honda engines are generally known to be high-revving engines that deliver power at the top end of the rpm range. Interpreting this another way, you need to rev the engine to see what the engine is really about. The current Civic Si model is a prime example—delivering peak power at 7,800 rpm and peak torque at 6,100 rpm.

In comparison, the standard CSX

is a separate digital display above the tachometer. Driving a manual transmission required getting used to looking up and down at the speed and engine rpms. I wish these two displays were closer together. The leather interior is comfortable and pleasant. The Technology package adds the Acura navigation system to the audio system in the centre console. The GPS navigation touch screen opens downward to reveal the CD/DVD disc slot and card reader.

With this vehicle, Acura is targeting buyers who are looking for something a little more upscale than the mainstream compact sedans, but who still want to keep the price under CDS30,000. Inevitably, the CSX will be compared to the Civic in the decision-making process. The

distinguishing feature of the CSX is a complete package of performance, luxury, and brand name value.

For about \$100 less, the Civic Si has a more powerful engine, but without the leather interior.

The EXL is priced several thousand dollars lower and has leather seats, but has a less powerful 1.8-litre engine. For those who really want the high-revving, 197bhp joy of the Si, the Type-S model is equipped with the Si engine, and bumps the MSRP up to CDS33,400.

The CSX has a distinct combination of driving characteristics and interior amenities, and the Acura name is associated with luxury, refinement, and build quality. Many buyers in the sub-30k market should find this package is good value.



2009 Acura CSX. TITUS HSU/THE EPOCH TIMES

# 2009 Ford Focus 2-Door Coupe

By **DURHL CAUSSEY**

At the end of a week of test driving the new Ford Focus, I was reasonably satisfied with the quality and the \$17,500 price. Even when leather seats, electronic stability control, fog lamps, and true value package, including 6-CD/mp3 audiophile, and moon roof with shade had increased the cost to about \$20,000.

What I liked, I mean really liked, was the 38 mpg in the city and highway that I got—even better than the 24-mpg city and 33-highway mpg EPA estimated by the manufacturer.

For a coupe, the Focus had more than enough shoulder and legroom for driver and passen-

ger. Admittedly, the rear space appeared too small for seating of two adults comfortably, especially when I placed the driver's seat as far back as I could.

Large knobs and easy to read labels in ice blue made adjustments for AM/FM radio stereo and Sirius satellite radio, and the instrument panel visibility keen and accommodating. Gauges and controls, also backlit in ice blue, help make the Focus cockpit refreshing to view as well as facilitate these tired old eyes of mine.

An acoustic glass windshield reduces engine and window noise, and ambient lighting helps to control the special LED effects of the foot wells and cup holders.

The Focus was outfitted with

SYNC, an award-winning, class exclusive, standard for communication and entertainment. The voice activated, customizable, media system integrates the Focus with most digital media players. It took an instant to load up and plug in. After that, you simply press a button on the steering wheel. Voice commands allow you to set it to search or track. Although my car didn't have the Bluetooth mobile phone feature, I can see how both systems will complement one another.

The Focus is packed with technology. The week I tested the vehicle, I insisted on the family referring to me as Captain Kirk. The Focus became my Enterprise.

The multifunctional computer

precisely displayed real-time fuel economy, and kept up-to-the-minute tabs on temperature and direction. Tonight, the Texas temperature will drop 40 degrees in 30 minutes as another cold front blows in from the Panhandle. Heated front seats will help me survive the climate change on the way from the ballpark, where today, the Rangers held their season opener. The warm seats helped late yesterday afternoon as well, as I was returning from a Maverick's game.

I drive with the seat as far back as it will go, and because the door pull is so far forward, it was hard to reach and close the driver's door. I know this is my opinion about design, but even my wife



2009 Ford Focus. COURTESY OF FORD MOTORS

had difficulty closing her passenger door because of the door pull design. Closing it requires wrist strength as opposed to arm strength needed when the door pull is placed more centrally on

the door.  
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