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Review: The 2013 Ford Fusion Lives Up To Its Name

BY ERIC TEGLER | JAN 14, 2012 | 12:57 PM | PERMALINK





Say you're waiting for the light to change so you can take the crosswalk to the next block. A 2011 Ford Fusion drives by. What are the odds you could identify it if your buddy said, "Quick, what make of car is that?"

The odds aren't good. From a looks standpoint, Ford's mid-size sedan has been an appliance-y

thing since its debut in 2006--a rolling toaster, largely indistinct from Toyota, Chevrolet, and Honda offerings. That's going to change this year.

The new Fusion brings together several European design influences, five different powertrains, improved telematics and materials to create a car you're much more likely to remember--a Fusion that lives up to its name.

2013 Ford Fusion

100 MPGe (Energi)

Engines: 2.5L 4 cylinder

Power: 170-237 hp, 170-250 lb-ft.

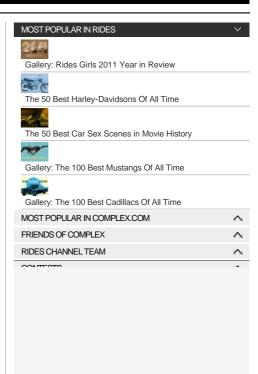
2.0L Atkinson Cycle 4-cylinder, AC Synchronous Motor

Fuel Consumption: 26-47 city/37-44 highway

The design emphasis is on "premium-ness" according to Fusion designer, Christopher Hamilton, who points to the car's jewel-like grille, squinting projector headlights, wrap around LED taillights, profile character lines and sweeping roofline as evidence. Clearly, Ford has aimed to incorporate some of the Euro-style that Americans often identify as "premium".

The new Fusion's shape is similar to that of the Mondeo sedan Ford sells globally with hints of Audi A4. The front fascia is reminiscent of various Aston Martin models. There's even a new Blue Oval badge above the grille. The look is firmly a part of Ford's "Kinetic 2.0" design language Hamilton says. I say it'll take some getting used to but it certainly stands out among the mid-size competition.

The design language continues inside where you'll find more space thanks to the 2012 Fusion's larger dimensions. You'll touch higher quality dash and seat materials and scan the Fusion's Smartphone-influenced center stack and instrument cluster. Touch-sensitive buttons on the center console and video display have been enlarged for easier actuation and all switchgear is now higher quality. A simplified Sync/MyFordTouch infotainment system integrates phones, PDAs and digital media players with more intuitive operation via voice commands, touch-screen inputs, or steering wheel controls. We'll need more time with the system to see if it's truly a step ahead.



GIRLS







There's ample driver-assist technology available including Ford's Active Park Assistance which will automatically parallel park the Fusion with the driver controlling the brake and throttle. Adaptive cruise control, blind-spot and lane monitoring systems aid in keeping you on course and there's even optically-enabled driver monitoring. If the system senses driver fatigue, a "coffee" icon lights on the instrument panel. Hill-start assist is available on manual and automatic transmission models.

On the driving side, the Fusion offers an entirely new chassis with more high-strength steel for increased stiffness/safety, new suspension and steering. The ride/handling balance should be dynamically similar to the previous smaller car though the new Fusion should be significantly quieter. Extended seat-time will tell for sure. The five available powertrain choices (all available at launch) emphasize efficiency. The Fusion is now possessed of an all four-cylinder lineup.

Joining the carry-over 2.5 liter engine are new 1.6 and 2.0 "Ecoboost" fours producing (?) and 237 horsepower respectively. Choose the 2.0 liter and you can have optional all-wheel-drive and a six-speed automatic with paddle-shift capability. The 1.6 will be available with a manual or automatic transmission and an automatic start/stop feature. So equipped, the Fusion should get a best-in-in-class 26 city/37 highway MPG according to Ford.

Better yet in fuel efficiency terms will be the Fusion Hybrid and Fusion Energi plug-in hybrid. The Fusion Hybrid blends an Atkinson-cycle 2.0 liter with Ford's third-generation hybrid electric drive which includes new software and hardware developed in-house. The system does entirely without belt-driven accessories, the a/c compressor, steering pump, etc. being electrically powered. A new regenerative brake system captures up to 95 percent of the kinetic energy created when you push the brake pedal. The Fusion Hybrid is expected to return 47 city/44 highway MPG.

The Fusion Energi offers the foregoing tech with plug-in capability in a package significantly larger than either the Chevrolet Volt or Toyota Prius plug-in hybrids. The Energi will come with full mobile phone connectivity and a specialized app for monitoring vehicle charge, range, and more. Ford says the Fusion Energi should achieve 100plus MPGe without the range concerns that still affect full electric vehicles. That said, don't be surprised to see a full electric Fusion at some point in the future.

In my opinion, both hybrids enjoy the same advantage that the previous Fusion Hybrid did - they don't scream "hybrid". Minor badging aside, the emphasis is on a handsome, capacious sedan that is likewise highly fuel efficient. No "statement" necessary.

Bottom Line

The 2012 Fusion will be the first mid-size Ford sedan in recent memory to incorporate a global design/platform with a range of fuel efficient conventional and alternative power choices matched by state-of-the-art driver assist and infotainment systems. All of it goes into a package intended to raise the bar in the medium-priced mid-sized sedan segment with breakout style and dynamics. The market will let us know shortly if Ford's Fusion is succeeding

Tags: ford, ford-fusion



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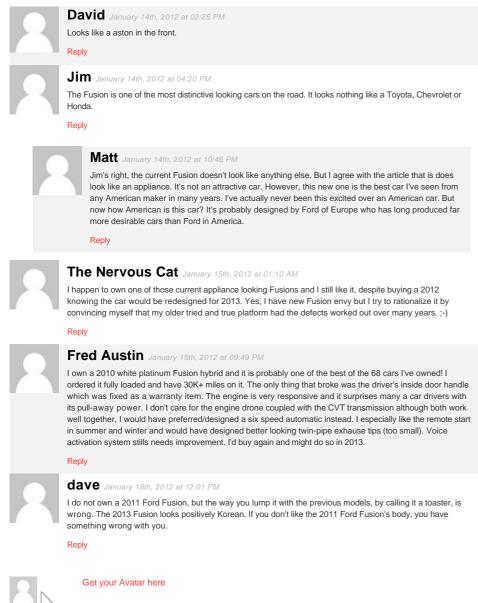
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