

Shattering the Assumptions

New-Generation Impreza Adds Surprisingly Comfy RS Model

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

With some cars, it's easy to make correct assumptions when you look at them.

That's not the case with this one, the new-for-2024 Subaru Impreza RS.

When this compact car showed up in my driveway with bright blue paint, 18-inch wheels, dinner-platter brake discs and an oversized "RS" badge on the back, I thought I knew what I was looking at: a teenager's dream car that would rattle the fillings out of my middle-age teeth.

After all, Subaru already makes the hardcore WRX, and it would stand to reason that the RS would be a slightly more affordable version of that wild ride. Lose the WRX's spoiler and water down its monster engine, and that's what I assumed driving an Impreza RS would be like.

When I took my first drive, though, I was surprised to experience how softly sprung, quiet and — the biggest shocker of all — comfortable it was for my aging backside.

It's more fun than the standard Impreza, no doubt. That's mainly thanks to the 183 horses hiding in its 2.5-liter engine, 30 more than the base Impreza's 2.0-liter engine can pump out.

With all-wheel drive, the RS is a hoot to sling around



Subaru redesigned its Impreza compact car for 2024 and added a new, more powerful RS model at the top of the range.

corners.

At the same time, this isn't even close to a track-day car. My biggest takeaway from the weeklong test drive was just how comfy it is for normal daily driving, a better commuter than thrill generator.

The suspension is unusually soft for a performance car, despite Subaru's insistence that it is "sport tuned."

The same thing applies to its marshmallow foam padding in the front seats.

A lot of sporty cars have

seats with deep side bolsters that pin the driver's body in place for sharp cornering, something that can make daily driving a literal pain. Instead of using those torture devices, Subaru fitted the RS with wide, squishy front seats.

The seats seem to perfectly fit the theme of this car. It doesn't inspire Formula 1 fantasies, but it makes a whole lot more sense for real life.

While the RS is a fresh addition to the lineup, it's

just one of many updates Subaru made to the Impreza for its 2024 redesign.

The newest version of the EyeSight driver assistance suite operates more smoothly and intuitively than before. It did a nice job keeping the car centered in the lane during my driving, and I appreciated the ability to tweak its response speed in the vehicle settings menu.

Those settings were easier to find and adjust because of the Impreza's

increased digital acreage on the dash. An 11.6-inch touchscreen is an option for the first time, along with wireless smartphone connectivity in Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Subaru claims the chassis is 10 percent stiffer, too.

While I love what this car is about — a comfy daily driver with a sporty flair — if I could wave a magic wand and change one thing about it, it would be the transmission.

The only transmission available in the Impreza, including the RS, is continuously variable. Subaru does a good job making it mimic the shift points of a traditional automatic, including a "manual" mode, but it's just not the same.

A true manual transmission would be nice for us purists. Fortunately, shift-it-yourself sticklers can still get a six-speed manual in the WRX this year.

As a whole, Subaru has done a stellar job making the new Impreza fun to drive while also checking a lot of logical boxes. It's encouraging to see a car brand continue to invest in small cars when other companies are pouring nearly all their innovative energy into big, boring crossovers.

The base Impreza is priced from \$22,995. The RS with its bigger engine tops the lineup starting at \$27,885.

AT A GLANCE

What was tested? 2024 Subaru Impreza RS (\$27,885). Options: Package with 10-way power driver's seat, Harman Kardon sound system and power moonroof (\$2,070). Price as tested (including \$1,090 destination charge): \$31,045

By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 105.1 in.
Length: 176.2 in.
Width: 70.1 in.
Height: 58.3 in.
Engine: 2.5-liter four cylinder (182 hp, 178 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: Continuously variable
Fuel economy: 26 city, 33 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 7
Price: 7
Handling: 6
Ride: 8
Comfort: 8
Quality: 8
Overall: 7

Why buy it? Subaru's redesigned Impreza for 2024 is solid, logical and fun. The new RS model adds a bit more speed and power at the top of its lineup without sacrificing comfort.

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With all-wheel drive, the RS is a hoot to sling around corners.



An 11.6-inch touchscreen is available in the newly redesigned Impreza.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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