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Hyundai's Next Step Up the Ladder



Hyundai Azera

By **NICK KURCZEWSKI**

Published: March 24, 2005

What's the point? The Hyundai Azera replaces the awkwardly styled XG350 sedan at the top of Hyundai's model range.

Is it real? Definitely, though the company is coy about how close it is to arriving in showrooms.

The company line: "The Azera is quite simply the best sedan Hyundai has ever created" -- Robert Cosmai, president and chief executive of Hyundai Motors America.

The view from here: The Azera looks as exciting as a bowl of vanilla ice cream. Still, vanilla is always a popular flavor, and despite its generic styling, the Azera's strong value and extensive list of standard features should win sales for Hyundai, a prospering automaker of late.

What makes it tick? A 265-horsepower, 3.8-liter V-6 engine and 5-speed automatic transmission will be standard equipment.

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How much? How soon? Hyundai would not say when the Azera will be on sale or how much it will cost. But the company is riding a wave of positive quality surveys that have elevated the company's image and sales figures, so there's no reason it would not be able to command a bit more than the XG350's \$25,000 price tag.

had to say at the press preview.

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