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FIVE TOYOTA MODELS NAMED CONSUMER REPORTS' TOP PICKS; FIRST TIME IN NEARLY A DECADE ONE BRAND HAS DOMINATED

New Camry Hybrid, Hyundai Sonata, and Subaru Impreza make top picks list debut

YONKERS, NY — As the competition grows stronger with each passing year, it has been increasingly difficult for a single automaker to dominate Consumer Reports' annual Top Picks list. This year, Toyota is the first brand to earn half of the top 10 spots in nearly a decade.

The redesigned Toyota Camry Hybrid, and Highlander edged out the competition to become Top Picks in Consumer Reports' Family Sedan and Family SUV categories respectively. The Camry Hybrid delivers a surprising 38 mpg overall fuel economy—the best in class and as good as some smaller and less versatile hybrids.

The two new Toyota additions join the incumbent Prius, RAV4, and Sienna as the best in their individual categories to secure the brand a starring role in this year's list.

Consumer Reports' 2012 Top Picks report, Automakers Report Cards and other key findings from the Annual Auto Issue were announced at a press conference today before the Washington Automotive Press Association (WAPA) in Washington, D.C. For more details and videos of the Top Picks, go to www.ConsumerReports.org.

"Every year the competition grows tighter; in recent years as many as nine different brands have taken the top spots. Combined with the improved Camry, Toyota's ability to maintain a competitive lead among hybrids and SUVs is a big factor in its strong presence on this year's list," said Rik Paul, Consumer Reports' automotive editor.

The last time a single brand held such a grip on Consumer Reports' Top Picks was Honda in 2003. Historically a strong performing brand, this year there are no Honda models on the list for the second time in three years.

Consumer Reports' Top Picks are the best all-around models in their categories, chosen from more than 275 vehicles the organization has recently tested. Top Pick models must meet CR's stringent criteria in three areas: road test, reliability, and safety. They must rank at or near the top of their category on overall road test scores; they must have earned an average or better predicted-reliability Rating based on problems Consumer Reports subscribers reported on 1.3 million vehicles in the latest survey; and they must perform well if included in crash or rollover tests by the government or the insurance industry.

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The Hyundai Sonata and Subaru Impreza also make their Consumer Reports' Top Picks debuts. The Sonata was named Top Pick Affordable Family Sedan, while the recently tested Subaru Impreza narrowly edged out the Hyundai Elantra as Top Pick Small Car. The all-wheel drive Impreza gets high marks for being a well-rounded sedan with nimble handling and a compliant roomy interior, and absorbent ride that rivals some luxury sedans.

The Toyota Prius was named CR's Top Pick Green Car for the 11th time and the ninth consecutive year—both records claimed by no other model in the history of Consumer Reports' Top Picks. The Prius, including the recently tested Prius V wagon version, continues to set the standard for its blend of fuel efficiency, practicality, and affordability. The 44 overall mpg CR measured for the hatchback is still the highest of any five-passenger, non-plug-in vehicle CR has tested and the 41 mpg for the new Prius V wagon easily tops its class.

Three returning models round out the list: the Chevrolet Avalanche, Ford Mustang, and Infiniti G. The iconic Ford Mustang earns CR's Top Pick in the Sporty Car category. The 5.0-liter V8 in the GT coupe provides scorching acceleration, a great exhaust sound, and good fuel economy for its class. The Infiniti G returns as Top Pick Sports Sedan with its inviting blend of luxury and driving fun. And in the Pickup Truck category, the Chevrolet Avalanche provides the best combination of utility and versatility of any pickup CR has tested.

The Top 10 Picks By Category:

FAMILY SEDAN: Toyota Camry Hybrid (\$29,052). In addition to its impressive 38 mpg overall fuel economy, other high points include a comfortable ride; a roomy, quiet, cabin; fairly quick acceleration; and for 2012, a nicer interior and somewhat crisper handling (although the Camry is still no sports sedan).

SPORTY CAR: Ford Mustang (\$28,880 to \$43,880). The heart of this iconic sports car has always been its strong acceleration and rumbling V8 power. But now there's more to the Mustang than power. Agile handling, a decent ride, comfortable front seats, and very good fit and finish make the current version an inviting package. The Mustang delivers good fuel economy (22-24 mpg) for its class.

SMALL SUV: Toyota RAV4 (\$24,405 to \$30,328). With a four-cylinder engine, the RAV4 delivers some of the best gas mileage in its class (23 mpg). The spirited V6 version accelerates as quickly as many sports sedans and gets only 1 mpg less than the four-cylinder model.

AFFORDABLE FAMILY SEDAN: Hyundai Sonata (\$21,800). CR chose the four-cylinder Sonata as a more affordable alternative to the Camry Hybrid. The Sonata provides a roomy, well-equipped cabin, supple ride, nimble handling, and thrifty 27 mpg overall, for just a little bit more money than many small sedans.

FAMILY HAULER: Toyota Sienna V6 (\$35,810). The Sienna fits the bill nicely for families looking for a comfortable, roomy interior, plenty of features, and the ability to carry up to eight people. Among its high points are lively performance, decent fuel economy (20 mpg), and a comfortable ride, although the handling is rather lackluster. It's the only minivan that has at least average reliability.

SPORTS SEDAN: Infiniti G (\$34,225 to \$37,225). The G37's agile handling, blistering acceleration, and comfortable, well-crafted interior make it one of CR's highest-scoring sedans. The G is on this list for the sixth straight year. The less expensive but equally inviting G25 isn't as quick, but gets 24 mpg overall, 3 more than the G37.

GREEN CAR: Toyota Prius (\$26,750 to \$28,217). The Prius sets the standard for fuel efficiency, practicality, and affordability with its overall 44 mpg. Its roomy interior, comfortable ride, and hatchback versatility make it easy to live with. The 41 mpg of the new Prius V wagon easily tops its class.

SMALL CAR: Subaru Impreza (\$21,345). Redesigned for 2012, the all-wheel-drive Impreza is a well-rounded roomy sedan with nimble handling and a compliant, absorbent ride that rivals some luxury sedans. Fuel economy of 27 mpg overall is impressive for an AWD car.

PICKUP TRUCK: Chevrolet Avalanche (\$47,435). The Avalanche provides the best combination of utility and versatility of any pickup CR has tested. Its unified bed and cab help give it a steady, comfortable ride, and the cabin is quiet. Its overall mpg is 14.

FAMILY SUV: Toyota Highlander (\$38,578 to \$47,255). The refined, comfortable, and quiet Highlander has consistently ranked near the top of its class in CR's road-test scores and has had above-average reliability. The V6 version delivers a decent 18 mpg overall, and the hybrid model tops all SUVs at 27.

Complete details on Consumer Reports' Top Picks for 2012, Automaker Report Cards, Best and Worst list and other key findings are available in the April issue of Consumer Reports on newsstands March 6th or visit www.ConsumerReports.org.

Consumer Reports' testing procedures are the most comprehensive of any U.S. publication or Web site. More than 50 individual tests are performed on every vehicle, including evaluations of braking, handling, comfort, convenience, safety, and fuel economy. Roughly 6,000 miles of general driving and evaluations are racked up on each test car during the testing process. CR buys all its test cars anonymously from dealers. Other reviewers base their evaluations on press cars that are hand-picked by the automakers.

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