



## Behind the Scenes at 2013 TestFest

Next year starts now

### CARS

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No, that headline is not a typo. This week is the 25th annual Automobile Journalists Association of Canada (AJAC) Canadian Car of the Year Awards TestFest. Not at all a cryptic title, TestFest entails five days of journalists from across the country testing over 170 new vehicle models in Ontario's picturesque Niagara Peninsula. A new AJAC inductee, I'm attending TestFest for the first time. However, because I regularly review cars for *DailyXY*, I'm one of the 'voting members' who helps decide the best new cars of 2013.

The range of cars is divided by category to keep the comparisons rational and relevant. Voting members are assigned to specific categories. I'm in the compacts and subcompacts, sensible given *DailyXY*'s urban constituency — besides I love small cars. The final results are released next February to help you, Johnny Consumer, decide on the best new purchases out there.

**The schedule:** Monday morning until mid-day Wednesday we test all the vehicles, back-to-back in short, carefully timed sessions. Each journalist follows the same route to keep evaluations as similar as possible. Wednesday afternoon, we're welcome to test cars outside our category.

All week, results are being tabulated by impartial professionals from KPMG. Hats off to the AJAC organizers who put all this together. It's a logistical house of cards.

Thursday is photo day and open-testing of all vehicles — but only drivers with track licenses will be admitted access to the performance categories. Then at 6 p.m., the category winners will be announced at a press conference. On Friday morning, CCTOY-voting journalists like me conduct their final tests on all eligible vehicles including the category winners. Then it's finally back home to dry out.

**What's rated:** The only cars to be tested are either completely new or significantly updated new

generations of existing models. So while you can bet that the 2013 Canadian Car of the Year will be an excellent buy, it's not necessarily the absolute best. Nonetheless the testing is a rigorous process you can trust. According the orientation guide they sent us, "Every detail, from safety features to cargo capacity, is thoroughly scrutinized, discussed, and individually rated by secret ballot. Over 40,000 data fields are generated by the journalists."


Which I'm hoping is less daunting than it sounds.


Image courtesy of [AJAC](#).

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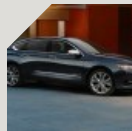
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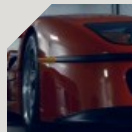
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