

Review: Cadillac's CUE system part entertainment, part security blanket

June 20 2013, by Jim Rossman



I've been driving a 2013 Cadillac XTS to review the Cadillac User Experience entertainment system. The sticker price on the car is a touch over \$60,000. I don't think I'm going to be reviewing a more expensive gadget than this one.

The CUE system has a few more features than the touch-screen systems on less-expensive General Motors models, so I also received a demo of a system in a Chevrolet Malibu that my colleague Terry Box was

reviewing.

My Fit has Honda's navigation system, which is nice, but you expect a Cadillac is going to be top-notch.

The touch screen is an expansive 8 inches, the same size as Apple's [iPad Mini](#), and will feel familiar if you've used a smartphone or tablet.

[Gestures](#) such as swiping between screens, scrolling with a finger flick and even pinching in or out to change the map zooming will be second nature to you.

Aside from the usual turn-by-turn [driving directions](#), the CUE system has 3-D views of major cities that show realistic building renderings.

The navigation system has real-time [traffic information](#) from SiriusXM and will warn you of upcoming traffic situations in time for you to make alternative plans (most of the time).

The XTS comes with the OnStar system, which provides a way to call a human and have them to look up businesses or addresses and download the results to your CUE system.

I took a day trip to Fort Worth, Texas, and used OnStar to look up and navigate to several points of interest.

You simply press the OnStar button and tell the operator where you want to go; the directions are beamed to your car in about 30 seconds.

Audiophiles will revel in the sound system. The XTS I tested had a 14-speaker Bose system that allowed the sound to flow through the entire cabin.

Every time I looked around, I seemed to find more speakers, including

two on top of each seatback in line with your ears.

The radio includes the usual AM/FM but adds HD radio stations, SiriusXM and Pandora if you attach your smartphone to one of three USB ports.

Media can also be played back from a smartphone, iPod, flash drive, SD card reader or even an optional CD player. Supported smartphone platforms include Google's Android, Apple's iOS and BlackBerry.

The CUE system's natural voice command feature lets you interact with the unit by speaking in normal sentences. I told the system I'd like to listen to Bruce Springsteen. It answered by asking if I'd like to tune to E Street Radio on SiriusXM, which is the Springsteen channel. Very slick.

The audio system lets the user save up to 60 favorites, which can include any AM, FM, HD or XM radio station, any contact's phone number or even specific albums on stored media.

The dashboard of the XTS is one big 12.3-inch video screen with several different gauge configurations ranging from simple to performance. On each dash configuration there is a panel that can show data from the [navigation system](#), audio system, phone or vehicle information, letting you see the song playing (with album art) from XM or Pandora as well as station information.

The dash can also show a smaller view of your route on a map.

You can make phone calls, either through your phone via Bluetooth or through the OnStar system if you have an OnStar voice plan.

If you connect your smartphone, your contacts, recent calls and voicemail messages are available through the CUE system.

Calls are heard through the car's sound system speakers. The microphone is mounted above the driver's head near the visor.

The CUE system also features current weather and forecast information. Weather information is provided by SiriusXM, so no phone connection is necessary.

Controls for the car's climate control system are also accessed through the touch screen.

Other helpful information, such as gasoline prices and local movie times, can be accessed through CUE.

I had a great week driving the XTS. I was a little intimidated with the CUE system for the first day, but I found it to be very helpful. I could usually find my way to what I needed to do.

I really enjoyed using OnStar to load directions into the GPS system.

After the initial Bluetooth pairing with my iPhone, the car recognized and connected with the phone every day, without fail.

There's a hidden compartment behind the control buttons that opens slowly when you touch the edge of the panel. Inside the compartment is room for your cellphone or a music player and a USB port surrounded by a blue light.

There's a valet mode, where you can set a quick PIN to limit access to the system so the valet guy can't change your settings or open that secret compartment.

It's impossible to learn everything about a new system in a week, just as it's impossible to review it completely in this space.

Suffice it to say General Motors has outdone itself with the CUE system. It features almost everything I could ask for, and a few things I was not expecting (movie times).

As I sat in the Malibu watching its entertainment system's demonstration, I noticed the differences, of course, but I also began seeing the underlying similarities between the Cadillac's CUE system and that of the much cheaper Malibu.

GM has put a lot of thought into these systems, and if you're shopping for a GM car, I'd recommend giving their entertainment options a test drive.

CADILLAC USER EXPERIENCE:

-Pros: Feels like mission control, but in a very accessible way.

-Cons: Almost too much information to absorb ... almost.

-Bottom line: You'll feel comfortable with the CUE system. It's one heck of an [entertainment system](#) and a security blanket.

-On the Web: www.cadillac.com/cadillac-cue.html

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