

Style and Design of New Accord for U.S. Market

Daisuke SAWAI* Taichi HAGIWARA*
Hideki TAGAMI* Keiichi ARAKI*

ABSTRACT

Honda sedans have always looked “Advanced” and “Sporty.” Continuing to build upon this theme, the new Accord was developed with the concept keywords of “Advanced & Powerful” to fit with the time. We sought to set a new standard in midsize sedans, combining the reliability and social nature required for a sedan with an unmistakable individuality.

For the exterior, the Accord was developed to assert a sense of presence that is stately, as well as being dynamic and powerful. For the interior, it is an invitation to enjoy a comfortable and refreshing environment infused with premium luxury.

1. Introduction

Currently in its eighth generation in the North American market and gaining stronger presence in Asia every year, the Accord is a global model with annual sales of 700 000 units. It is also marketed in Japan as a luxury sedan with modified specifications, under the name “INSPIRE.”

A longstanding tradition of solid reliability has won widespread support and earned high customer satisfaction. But with intensified competition in this segment and emergence of new categories such as SUVs and large minivans, we saw a need for the Accord’s clear evolution and a greater market presence.

In the U.S. market, the Accord is a benchmark model in the midsize sedan category. It is perceived as a family car, but analysis of the main customer segment revealed a surprising fact that less than 30% of Accord owners were actually “Family” (husband, wife, and kids), showing a change in the user demographics.

Meeting with many owners and carefully investigating usage scenarios and preferences led us to redesign the package from a concept level.

It has evolved from a family car to a personal sedan, with social presence like that of a stylish business suit. In addition to improved economic efficiency and amenities, the Accord has evolved into a more premium vehicle.

2. Package Layout

A personal sedan is mainly used for commuting. Many owners commute on freeways over one hour each way. This consideration motivated us to put together a human-centered package, an environment where people can spend many hours in comfort and drive long distances without undue stress. The A-pillar was shifted backward and its section was made thinner to enhance visibility. Having the hood in sight also gives the driver a better spatial sense of the vehicle. Also, drivers of this sedan class tend to

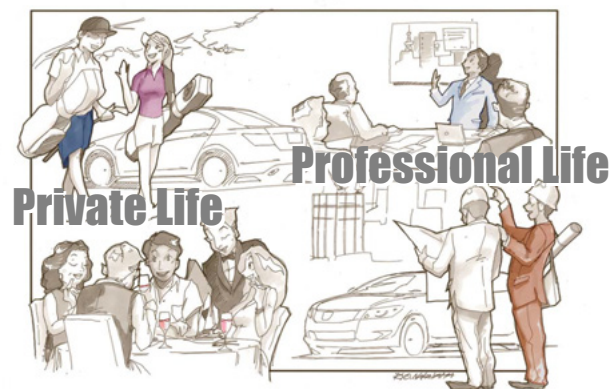


Fig. 1 Usage scenarios

* Automobile R&D Center

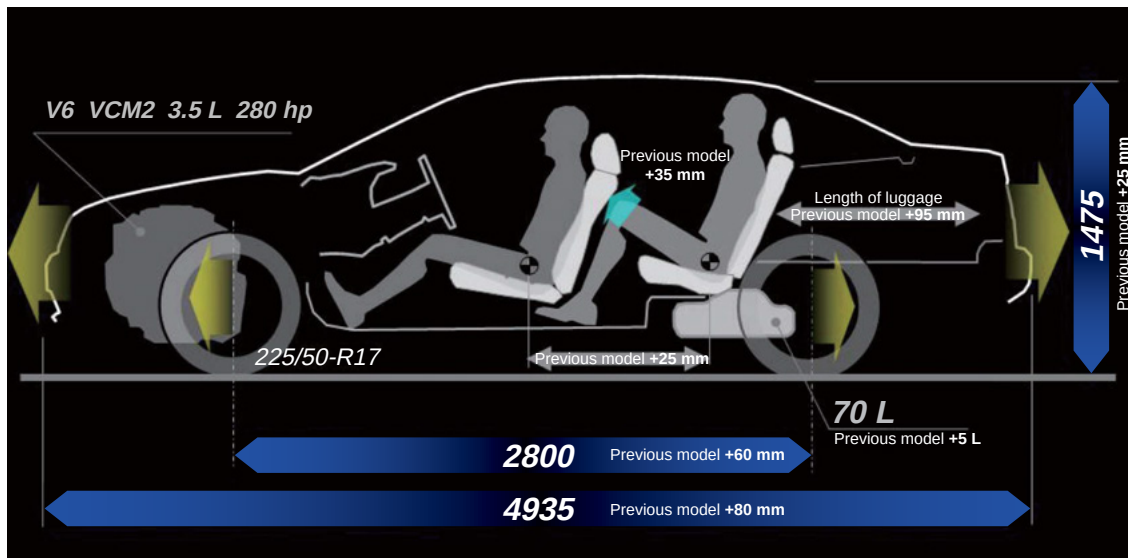


Fig. 2 Package layout

look beyond their own comfort. A pleasant environment for the front passenger and rear seat passengers is also important, because they frequently dine out with another couple or take clients around (Fig. 1).

We thought a cabin should offer an ample hospitality space. 17-inch tires and bigger fuel tank capacity (65 L to 70 L) are featured, yet a spacious cabin that is typical of an FF is further enlarged with a lower floor layout.

The front couple distance (space between the right and left passengers) is enhanced by 40 mm, while the center console was enlarged by 75 mm, leading to a notch above vehicle class with upscale feeling. The rear seat's knee space was increased by 35 mm, making it comparable to minivans and SUVs. The Accord is an invitation to enjoy a sedan in new ways (Fig. 2).

3. Exterior Design

The exterior design, inspired by the “Advanced & Powerful” theme, signals the Accord’s evolution.

We insisted the overall framework to have a sedan-inherent frame, with an independent nose, cabin, and trunk. We strove to create a ram-rod straight posture as if the spine is pierced through the vehicle, from front to rear.

The CIVIC’s front pillar is moved forward to



Fig. 3 Side view

emphasize its original form, but the Accord’s front pillar is moved backward to emphasize a solid sedan frame. The different roles of the CIVIC and Accord are reflected in their frames (Fig. 3).

We intentionally kept the tip of the nose lower in the past generations of Accord, but the new model features a more substantial, aggressive nose and boldly chiseled corners, projecting the image of a solid sedan that is also sporty.

A bigger cabin may make the vehicle appear somewhat boxy, but we actualized a three-dimensional and nimble appearance. The roofline was rounded and tapered to create a three-dimensional shape, with an added benefit of reduced air resistance. Additionally, deep-drawn fenders and outer panels accentuate the width and create good stance, as all four tires grip the ground (Fig. 4).

The luxurious body panels were developed under the outside light. We aimed to make the vehicle appear more three-dimensional with reflections of the surrounding

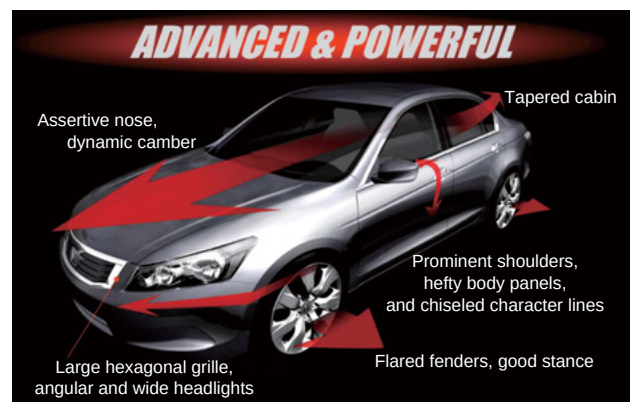


Fig. 4 Advanced, powerful exterior design

scenery. Especially, the hood surface was inflected upward to reflect the gradations of beautiful sky to give a more expressive appearance. Likewise, the shoulders also reflect colors of the sky this way, reinforcing its strong flare shape. Bold, chiseled-looking character lines are featured to express its sharpness in any scenes, be it under a strong sunlight or cloudy and gloomy sky.

The dynamic hexagonal grille and headlights with horizontal motif make the front of the vehicle appear wider; by doing so, we aimed to create a fearless expression (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Accord sedan exterior

4. Interior Design

The interior design concept is “Advanced & Comfort.” The aim is to have a combination of an advanced driver’s cockpit, as well as a spacious, exhilarating cabin space in a notch above, premium space. First, to make the improved cabin space even bigger and more comfortable, we ensured the instrument panel’s shape to accentuate a horizontal motif. Along the instrument panel, decoration panels were added from the center, spreading outward, to enhance spaciousness. Further, we constructed the upper dash with bold negative surfaces, while the middle pad is lowered down to reduce a sense of heaviness, thereby actualizing unprecedented exhilarating space (Fig. 6).

The front couple distance was widened, enabling a wider center console and an arm rest. Besides having a sense of spaciousness, it offers a more upscale image. A wider armrest provides enhanced functions with cup-holders and storage space. More luxurious and comfortable cabin space is therefore attained (Fig. 7).

The interface concept was based on instant recognition and intuitive operation, so the displays are placed as high as possible, and operation controls are arranged as close as possible to the driver.

The Progressive Commander is used to enable centralized controls at hand. The display location is higher and away from the driver so as to reduce the eye movement while driving. The advanced cockpit with enhanced visibility and operability is thus actualized (Fig. 8).

Indicators are placed in large, easy-to-see dual clusters, creating a neatly organized appearance yet showing our commitment to quality material and authenticity. Extra lines around the center panel and console are minimized to show a bigger surface area, which in turn creates good

presence. We made a round, three-dimensional shaped seat design. This creates a snug feeling as if one is comfortably wrapped, at the same time giving a refreshing impression from the rear seats (Fig. 9)

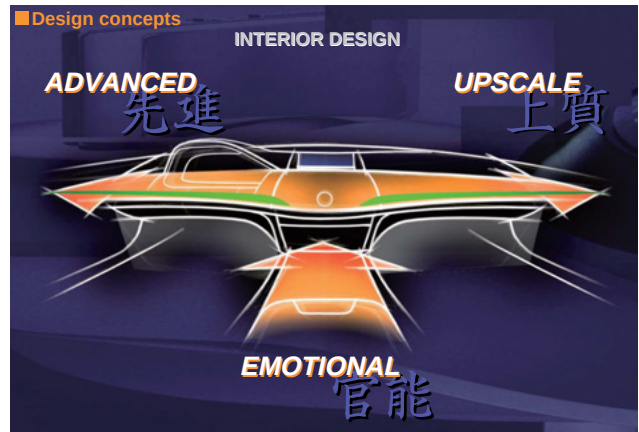


Fig. 6 Advanced, comfortable interior design



Fig. 7 Instrument panel design



Fig. 8 Accord sedan instrument panel



Fig. 9 Accord sedan interior

5. Color Design

5.1. Exterior

The vehicle exterior has good presence, but to further enhance this, a bold and aggressive color line-up and new color development were set out.

In the new color development, under the “Bold Metal & Character” theme, we expressed strength with tough metallic tones. All colors have the common texture theme of bright and intensely shining particles, as if the vehicle were carved out of a chunk of metal and polished. Under this color line-up proposal, the entire variations offer collective strength.

The newly developed gray metallic color, Polished Metal Metallic, was created to show contrasting shades as in metal, to make the great body shape more three-dimensional. Bordeaux Beige Metallic, an unconventional beige color, was created with full-bodied gold shine.

Basque Red Pearl with mellow richness and shading was also newly developed to match the all-new Accord (Fig. 10).

5.2. Interior

To express the interior design concept of “Advanced & Comfort,” we placed an emphasis on an upscale and high-quality image.

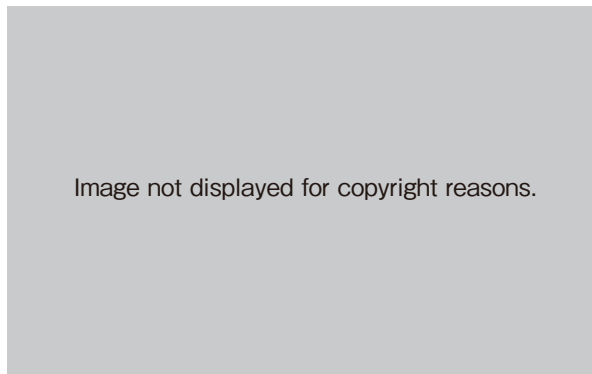


Fig. 10 Exterior colors



Fig. 11 Interior colors

The color line-up offers newly developed modern gray in addition to black and beige. By offering each an individual theme and character, we are able to respond to a wide range of customer preferences. The black interior is combined with bright silver decorations to give a sporty and cool impression, while a warm beige tone sets a rich ambience with luxurious wood grain decorations. The gray interior color is finished in a brighter hue to enhance an exhilarating and upscale image (Fig. 11).

6. Coupe Styling and Design

The Accord has a two-door derivative model (a U.S. focused model, some of which is exported to Middle East). The new coupe reinforces the role of being the image leader for the Accord. To survive in the shrinking coupe market, we thought a more attractive model than ever was needed, thus we reduced the number of common parts for the exterior, and evolved the coupe design into a more original and distinctive direction. Difference from the sedan is emphasized, yet at the same time, we tried to strike a good balance by keeping the Accord family linkage (Fig. 12).

The wheelbase is 60 mm shorter than the sedan to show case its dynamic performance frame, and to highlight the characteristic of this coupe being a personal car. Lower driving position and redesigned rear seat space embody a dynamic form with sleek cabin. The exterior highlight of this coupe is its flared shoulder in contrast with an intensely tapered cabin. It was a designer's chance to demonstrate his ability in creating a surface construction that lithely changes, like well developed muscles supporting the legs of a wild animal. Additionally, the manufacturing division's superb press forming technology enabled the creation of thick fenders and outer panels. Its thick, integrated bumper gives the

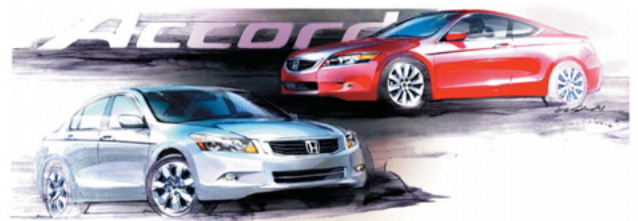


Fig. 12 Sedan and coupe



Fig. 13 Accord coupe

front-end a stronger presence, and the projector headlight creates a sharp and virile expression while keeping its “family connection” with the sedan. Compared to a usability-focused sedan, the coupe’s rear-end focuses more on styling with sporty design cues, such as the bumper shape that reinforces a sense of integration (Fig. 13).

7. Accord around the World

The Accord is becoming an important model in Asia as well. Asia has different values towards automobiles, and this model is positioned as a luxury vehicle. In some regions, the Accord may even be priced similarly as a house. The larger body size leading to a more upscale image was in part due to the Accord’s role in Asia. For this reason, excessive and decorative changes were not added, and only small modifications were applied to comply with the regional regulations. However, the vehicle accessories were enhanced with items including clear combination lamp lens covers and an additional rear fog light garnish.

The interior, with an aim to be more spacious and exhilarating, has the basic frame, but the materials are changed and amenities are added to create characteristics with enhanced upscale ambience.

In the Japanese market, it is sold under the name “INSPIRE” same as its predecessor.

For the interior, exclusive color coordination is introduced. The black interior uses materials with some colors to create more dimensions. For the exterior, a special black with some colored highlights (Premium Blackish Pearl) is added to the line-up to express a sophisticated glow (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14 INSPIRE

8. Conclusion

The new Accord is developed to raise the appeal of a sedan to its highest level. There are some regional differences in specifications and naming, but we believe the finished model offers luxury to its customers around the world.

The cabin space and exterior body are made bigger, yet the fuel economy is improved due to reduced air resistance and application of technology such as the VCM⁽¹⁾.

It may require some time to judge whether the direction of this new Accord conforms to the ever-changing global environment and economic conditions. We hope that the relationship of trust Honda has built with its customers over many generations will further deepen through this new Accord.

Reference

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■ Author ■



Daisuke SAWAI



Taichi HAGIWARA



Hideki TAGAMI



Keiichi ARAKI