

In your face.

The Hyundai Genesis Coupe has put its sheet metal on even stronger steroids.

By Joe Sage



Above: the 2011 Hyundai Genesis Coupe 3.8 R-Spec M/T
Below: the 2013 Hyundai Genesis Coupe 3.8 Grand Touring A/T

Through the oddities of model years and press fleet schedules, we drove the 2011 Hyundai Genesis Coupe 3.8 R-Spec for a week at New Year's (see our March/April issue), and we drove the 2013 Hyundai Genesis Coupe 3.8 Grand Touring for a week in May. Did it accomplish two years' evolution in what, for us, was just four and a half months? One look at the sheet metal tells the tale. The new Genesis has received the more current strong front body visuals of the Veloster, from its apparent large grille opening (which actually contains a significant piece of bumper), to its evolved lighting front and rear, with lenses working their way upward and around to the sides at both ends. The double creases and beltline dip of the sides are about the same as before, ensuring a degree of continuity and recognition for the casual observer.

Balanced inside and out

One of our first logbook entries about the new Genesis Coupe said "everything about it is nice"—a nice drive, nice shifting, nice handling. For the interior, we found a style that is not too clean and not too fancy.

What about the new sheet metal? Hyundai is already known for a lot of creases, folds and tucks, and this one adds a few more, along with its haunched stance, plunging beltline, strong grille and high-style lights. Is it overwrought? Not in this case: this exaggerated sheet metal is what gives the Genesis Coupe its style. Maybe it verges on comic book cool, but overall that's a win.

Inside, front and center, the main binnacle has a tach and speedo, then digital instruments for engine temp, fuel and a variable center readout. Three other gauges include an MPG gauge, a gauge for torque (something more manufacturers should do), and one for oil temp.

In freeway driving, during rush hour aggressiveness, the transmission can get the job done if you stay on it, but we backed off our enthusiasm for it as the week wore on. We had to punch it, feel its pulse and force some shifts. Whether it impresses you or frustrates you depends upon what you're used to. You really have to get on that automatic transmission to get the power and shifts you need. The 8-speed may be delivering another mile per gallon, but for performance, it was inconsistent in challenging situations. And the fact that the powertrain creates so much grunting and growling in the process—by design—may also either impress or embarrass, depending. We would tone that down. In an area full of Porsches and Mustangs, sound effects alone don't really cut it. (Speaking of sound, for the car's target demographic, we would suggest a more potent audio system.)

All that said, our bottom line was that we were able to consistently drive it like we mean it, and we found it overall to be quite capable and enjoyable.

As for that target demographic, this car brought kid racers of every stripe out of the woodwork—lots of Hondas and other Hyundais, all of whom wanted to cut this car off in pursuit of "outperforming." If they could.

Style and value, then and now

When we drove the 2011 model a few months back, we distilled it down to two things: "its gorgeous shape and black-over-black-and-red presence," and its base price of \$26,750. That car in fact stickered at just \$26,940—it was so well equipped, from safety to drive electronics to entertainment, that the only add-ons were a cargo net, iPod cable and floor mats. That struck us as a bargain, especially for a well-suspended car powered by a 348-hp V6 and still achieving 27 or 28 MPG (manual or automatic—30 or 31 with its 2.0T engine option).

And now? Our new Genesis Coupe stickered at a base of \$32,000—\$32,875 with destination. In Circuit Silver over black, it came with the same V6 and an 8-speed automatic rated at 18/28/22 MPG city/hwy/comb.

So as the two primary things of note last winter were styling and price, they are again. Styling is subjective, but we'd say the new execution is a solid update, appropriate to the times and to the vehicle's niche. But did that update warrant a twenty-plus-percent rise in price? Or was it actually that big a rise, all things considered?

Hyundai's lineup has grown to include the Accent, up through Elantra, Veloster, Sonata, Azera, Genesis and



Equus—plus three utility vehicles. Positioning each—by price, style, performance and target market—has to be an increasing challenge, especially with the Veloster itself now a sporty value leader.

For 2013, the Genesis Coupe 2.0T (with a 274-hp inline-four turbo) has a base price of just \$24,250, and the 2.0T R-Spec starts at \$26,500. (These still come very thoroughly equipped.) So wait—the R-Spec is just \$26,500? Well, that must be it. We had the R-Spec last winter. At this point, we had to go back to the files and pull the Monroney in disbelief. No, last winter's was the 3.8L V6 R-Spec. \$26,750. The new 3.8L V6 R-Spec is \$28,750. Okay, two grand in two model years (for us, four and a half quick months). And our new tester was not only the 3.8 V6, but also the Grand Touring, at \$32,000. (If you'd like to spend more, there's a 3.8 Track for \$33k.)

So the price for a 3.8 R-Spec has gone up 7.5 percent in two model years. The other twelve percent difference between our testers was for the Grand Touring trim. This buys you an 8-speed automatic instead of a 6-speed manual (though we'd prefer the less expensive manual). It buys you 18-inch wheels (normally less expensive) instead of the R-Spec's 19-inchers. It buys you a sport-tuned suspension instead of the R-Spec's track-tuned suspension (though for another grand, on top of the Grand Touring's features premium, you can get that track-tuned suspension back). You lose the R-Spec's Torsen limited-slip differential. You gain touchscreen NAV. The seats get full leather surfaces, and climate control is a bit fancier. There is a power tilt-and-slide glass sunroof (a tradeoff in weight, headroom and heat). And a few other features.

A key part of the price comparison comes from last winter's R-Spec having received the upgraded V6—348 hp up from 304—earlier than the rest of the 3.8 lineup. Put that all together, and we'd recommend shopping pretty carefully. You just might find more of what you're looking for, at a lower price, in the Genesis Coupe 2.0T and/or R-Spec models. And, for a car that can make a case for taking on performance coupes at far higher cost, value is still a key proposition—the more, the better. ■

