

Born a rebel.

An R-Design in Rebel Blue, ready to rock and roll.

By Joe Sage



What makes the Volvo S60 different from your great-aunt's Volvo of thirty or forty years ago is, well, thirty or forty years—of technological advancements, as well as some philosophical evolution about what makes a well-engineered car a great thing to own and drive on a daily basis. Safety—the Volvo brand's distinctive *raison d'être* back in the day—is still delivered in top form, but this is not as distinctive as it was then, thanks to legislative mandates and engineering improvements across the board.

What makes the Volvo S60 distinctive today is its carefully crafted balancing of mainstream utility, safety and technology with performance and—perhaps somewhat unexpectedly—a dose of bad boy charm.

OUR VOLVO S60 T6 AWD R

What defines our particular test S60 within the model lineup are three things, as revealed in its complex alphanumeric "T6 AWD R" name. First, it bears a T6 six-cylinder twin-scroll turbocharged engine (as opposed to the T5 five-cylinder turbo also available). Second, it has all-wheel drive. And third, it bears the trappings of an R-Design model (see sidebar for inclusions).

Much of this model's name is redundant, as every T6 model is an all-wheel-driver (while T5 models have front-wheel drive standard, with AWD as an option). And S60 R-Design models all have the T6 engine and AWD.

Another sure sign that our test S60 is an R-Design is its paint: this vivid Rebel Blue finish—as cool as a blue gas flame—is an R-Design-only option. Similar blue appears on other Volvo performance products, from the small badges on Polestar models (see our May/June 2012 issue), to Volvo's top European racecars. And Rebel also conveniently starts with R.

There are also Premier, Premier Plus and Platinum models variously available among the three (T5, T6 and T6 R-Design). The farther you swim upstream, the fewer of those model options there are, as the base models are successively better endowed. At the R-Design level, the car is already so well appointed that it only has enough headroom left for a Platinum version.

The Platinum trim level is the only thing missing from our tester—well, that and one tech package, as delineated in the sidebar. Platinum would be a \$2700 add-on, bringing you voice-activated nav, upgraded audio and a park-assist rear camera. Add that, along with the \$2100 tech package, and with destination the car would creep to just a hair above \$50,000. That's still very competitive, in a segment full of well-known German and Asian performance sedans. Volvo would like to get your attention in this segment, making this a good time to buy in.

THE T6 R-DESIGN MODEL NICHE

We're actually big fans of Volvo's 2.5-liter T5—a near-reincarnation of the superb five Audi brought us in the '80s and '90s, striking a great balance among weight, power and smoothness, between a four and a six.

But a six is an easier sell, so it often ends up in some of the best cars. The 3.0-liter T6 S60 weighs about 300 pounds more than the front-drive T5, but is distinctly more powerful: 300 hp versus 250, or 325 hp with the R-Design we are driving here. That's a 30 percent increase in power, with just an 8.7 percent gain in weight. With the AWD option on a T5, the weight gap



approaches being negligible.

No matter how you slice it, we found our Volvo S60 to be a potent combination. And still priced in the \$40s.

The T5 has a base price of \$31,900. All-wheel drive adds \$2000 to this. Skip the trim packages, maybe get some sport pedals, definitely get the AWD, and you're still at \$35,325. Ten grand less than the T6 R-Design. But not available in Rebel Blue, and read that R-Design feature list again, at right.

The tires, wheels and chassis make a noticeable difference. Spoilers and diffusers help performance and fuel economy (rated at 18/26/21 MPG city/highway/combined, the same as a non-R T6). Power was impressive, with no turbo lag. In fact, we noted a distinct turbo boost at every punch. This is one potent Volvo.

The T5 does get as much as 30 MPG highway in FWD. That's a fuel economy advantage of 15.4 percent, but still with that power advantage of 30 percent. If you know where your priorities lie—power vs MPG—you can decide easily enough. If you value both, you could find an easy rationalization in either, although the math ultimately favors the power of the T6 R-Design, if budget allows.

The S60 R-Design has a standard Sport chassis. The T5 has a chassis tuned for Touring. In between, the non-R T6 has a Dynamic chassis, but is available with a FOUR-C Active Chassis (Continuously Controlled Chassis Concept), which allows you to switch among Comfort, Sport and Advanced settings. The lower-tier T5 and the upper-tier T6 R-Design do not offer this, and we did note some floatiness to the suspension in the R-Design, when we might hit a rare bump around town. At highway speeds, though, or actually in most any normal use, it hunkers down and handles very well. But we're still curious how that FOUR-C might adapt to this setup.

Ultimately, this sedan has everything we want: the comfort and presence of a relatively large car, with the power and maneuverability of a relatively sporty one. ■

2013 VOLVO S60 T6 AWD R

DRIVETRAIN AND ELECTRONIC HANDLING

- 3.0L 6-cylinder twin-scroll turbo DOHC alloy engine with CVT: 325 hp, 354 lb-ft: ULEV II
- 6-speed Geartronic auto w/ Sport Mode
- AWD with Instant Traction
- ASC; DSTC w/Sport Mode
- Independent strut front susp w/ anti-dive
- Fully independent multi-link rear susp
- Torque vectoring corner control
- Driver-selectable speed-sensitive steering
- Ventilated disc brakes w/ ABS
- EBD/EBA: electronic brake distrib/assist

R-DESIGN FEATURES

- 18-inch alloy wheels with all-season tires
- R-Design sport chassis
- R-Design front and rear spoilers
- R-Design rear diffuser and polished pipes
- Leather seating surfaces, accent inserts
- Blue watch-dial instrument cluster
- Aluminum inlay and sport pedals
- Perf. leather steering wheel and shift knob

PRICING

BASE	\$43,900
CLIMATE PACKAGE: Heated front seats, heated windshield washers, interior air quality system	\$700
DESIGNATION	\$895
TOTAL	\$45,495

NOTE: Technology Package also available but *not* included in our test build would provide adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, distance alert, collision warning and pedestrian protection with full auto-brake, road sign information and active high beam, for an additional \$2100.