

Hey, handsome.

VW shakes off aura of older New Beetle by Joe Sage

It's surprising to realize the new (A5) Beetle is now in its sixth year, about to enter its seventh. This seems to indicate how long it takes to reset perceptions after the relatively slow-selling New Beetle of 1998-2011. Introduced in 2011 as a 2012 model, this new Beetle ("new" is no longer part of the actual name) clearly aimed to capture more of the feel of the original, along with more of the market, than the prior old New Beetle had.

Even the best industrial designers and product planners can make a misstep, especially if they try to overfocus on a characteristic or segment. (J Mays and Peter Schreyer, both the best of the best, were involved in the Concept One show car and production New Beetle.) We can think of a couple of instances of this. The early 2000s Macintosh G3 and iBook, with their swirly shapes, bright colors and general aura of oh-so-creative users turned off the entire business segment, as well as designers who didn't pride themselves in silliness. And the prior generation New Beetle, hell-bent on seeking the Flower Power aura of '60s Beetles modified in the '70s, turned off about

half the population with the whole persona that started with its front-and-center bud vase and spread from there throughout the car. (The Malibu Barbie New Beetle may have been that generation's ultimate expression.)

Apple got back on track when they introduced the Quicksilver model, in a businesslike Graphite skin. It's not hard to see parallels to our handsome new Beetle, especially this one, with a handsome Platinum Grey Metallic skin, 19-inch Tornado machined aluminum-alloy wheels and Quicksilver-fast 210-hp turbocharged engine.

This sample is maxed out: add all the features of SE, SEL and R-Line, and you have a car that needs no options (see sidebar). The 2-liter engine beats a base (\$25,490) 1.8L turbo by 40 horses, not as fast as a Golf R, but getting there. The R-Line spec adds sport suspension and sport seats, as well as a variety of visuals.

Even with the top down, this new Volkswagen Beetle is lean and mean. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....2.0L TSI DOHC 16v direct-inject 4cyl Turbo	
DRIVETRAIN.....	FWD
HP/TORQUE.....	210 hp / 207 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....	6-speed DSG automatic
BRAKES.....	F 12.3x1.0 vented, R 10.0x0.4 solid
SEATING.....	4
CARGO CAPACITY.....	7.1 cu ft
TURNING CIRCLE.....	35.4 ft
WEIGHT.....	3278 lb
FUEL TANK.....	14.5 gal
MPG.....	23/31/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE\$36,050

R-LINE® SEL INCLUDES: Bi-xenon auto headlights; LED DRLs; keyless entry/start; leather multifunc wheel and shift knob; A/C; 3-color ambient light; Bluetooth; USB; leather sport seats, heated front; cruise; addtl glovebox; 50/50 fold rear seat; rear spoiler; heated power mirrors; performance gauges; trip computer; MIB II Discover Media 6.3" color touchscreen; nav; VW Car-Net App-Connect; Fender premium audio; voice control; rear camera; blind spot, rear traffic alert; sport suspension; R-Line bumpers, door sill plates and fender badges; red calipers; allow-look pedals; gloss black mirror housings and door sills; foglights; 19" Tornado alum-alloy wheels.

DESTINATION CHARGE:820

TOTAL\$36,870

