

# GETTING IN TUNE

## NEW VELOSTER HAS A GOOD BEAT THAT YOU CAN EASILY DANCE TO

BY BJ KILLEEN

**A**ustin, Texas, may be the fastest growing music scene in the US. With an influx of trendy, young professionals seeking the best food, best music and a great nightlife, it was inevitable that great music followed. Which is exactly why Hyundai chose Austin to be the city where the redesigned Veloster was launched to the press. The all new 2019 Veloster fits the profile of the Austin city dweller almost perfectly. It's fun to drive, looks sharp, is unique in its segment and is aiming at single professionals who want to stand apart from the crowd.

We spent a few days in Austin as guests of Hyundai, where we had a chance to flog the Veloster around town, out on the open road and even through some of Texas' Hill Country area. The takeaway is that the new Veloster is even more fun and more refined than ever before.

Besides being all new in its design, the Veloster now offers five trim levels versus the previous

four. There are two models called the 2.0L and 2.0L Premium that feature a 2.0-liter Atkinson cycle engine matched with either a 6-speed manual transmission or 6-speed automatic, and then three trims—Turbo R-Spec, Turbo, and Turbo Ultimate—that come with a 1.6-liter inline turbocharged four-cylinder powerplant mated with either the 6-speed manual or 7-speed dual-clutch transmission.

Prices range from a reasonable \$18,500 for the entry model up to \$28,150 base for the Ultimate. Destination charges are \$885. Hyundai brought only two models for us to drive: the R-Spec manual trans and the Turbo Ultimate with the automatic transmission.

Because of its three-door configuration, the Veloster really has no direct competitor, but if you're looking to buy in the compact sporty market, you would consider the Mini Cooper, Fiat 500, Honda Civic Coupe and rumored soon-to-be-vanquished Volkswagen Beetle as the Veloster's competition.

Even though cars, especially small ones, are dropping in sales and popularity, Hyundai says the compact sporty car segment is somewhat stable. Young people still want good-looking, sporty, affordable vehicles, and the Veloster delivers on that request list.

The Veloster is important to Hyundai because it brings buyers into the brand and helps keep them there for the duration of their car-buying life. Some interesting statistics, according to Hyundai: Veloster buyers never considered a Hyundai before their

purchase, and 70 percent replaced another vehicle brand with that Hyundai purchase. In addition, almost half of Veloster owners did move up to another Hyundai vehicle. Veloster buyers are younger and have more household income than regular Hyundai buyers, so when it came time for Hyundai to decide what to do with Veloster, the answer was a no-brainer.

Because buyers in this segment insist on a vehicle that looks great and is fun to drive, Hyundai focused on those priorities. Hyundai designers made sure the Veloster still looked like a Veloster, but raised the styling bar in every way. At the front, the design is more aggressive: an inset honeycomb grille, aerodynamic headlamps, functional air inlets and a lower sloping hood really give the little sportster a personality. Front and rear fenders have been reshaped and look more integrated and athletic. Plus, the roofline has been lowered for better aerodynamics and a more proportional stance. The styling has grown up and projects the same maturity as the driving dynamics, which will have returning Veloster buyers singing praises.

The unique three-door design, a big part of the Veloster's identity, has been retained, thankfully. As the driver approaches the Veloster, his one-door side really delivers on the coupe design. The passengers coming in from the right see two welcoming doors, with the rear door's handle neatly hidden up high to retain the coupe styling. Since the Veloster is designed to appeal to single buy-

ers, the occasional driver-side rear seat passenger won't mind climbing in from the passenger side.

From the rear, the Veloster remains instantly recognizable, but you can tell it's been pumping iron. There are dual center exhaust returns, along with a more defined lower diffuser and available LED taillamps. Now 17-inch wheels and tires come standard, with 18s standard on the 2.0-liter Premium and above.

Overall dimensions for the Veloster changed only slightly. Overall length is up about an inch. It's also less than a half-inch wider, and height and wheelbase remain unchanged. Interior dimensions are almost the same as well, with the exception of rear-seat head room, which gained a half inch. When you think how little the exterior dimensions have changed, this is quite an accomplishment. Hyundai achieved this by repositioning the hinges on the rear hatch, as well as with unique density seat foam for the rear passengers.

Inside, the Veloster's focus is driver-oriented. While the front passenger isn't left out, you can see from the photo that the driver is way more important. Interior comfort is better than we expected: in the R-Spec, the cloth seats are comfortable, and we had plenty of head room, al-

though we aren't as tall as some of the other journalists. Even those well over six feet tall reportedly felt no discomfort. The Veloster feels quite roomy inside, which is tough to do in a compact car. Contrasting accent colors inside are bright and definitely add to the sportiness of the vehicle without being overdone.

There is a nice list of standard features on the entry-level 2.0-liter model, including a 7-inch touchscreen display, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, Bluetooth, cruise control, LED DRIs, automatic on/off headlamps and forward collision avoidance assist. The 2.0-liter Premium adds 18-inch wheels and tires, blind spot warning with cross traffic warning, pushbutton start with proximity key, a larger display and an Infinity audio system, wireless charge pad, heated front seats and leather/cloth seating surfaces.

The R-Spec model we drove featured a B&M Racing sport shifter, alloy pedals, a 4.2-inch color TFT instrument cluster and Michelin Pilot Sport 4 225/40R18 summer tires. The Turbo model adds a sunroof, power lumbar, and automatic temperature control. Because weight savings was important for the R-Spec model, the seats went back to

KEEP RIGHT >>



## SPECIFICATIONS

### VELOSTER 2.0

ENGINE	Nu 2.0 MPI Atkinson cycle 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	147 hp / 132 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	12.5:1
TRANSMISSION	6-spd manual / 6-spd auto
BRAKES	F: 11x.09 vented; R: 10.3x0.4 solid
WHEELS/TIRES	2.0: 17x7.0 alloy / 215/45R17 2.0 PREMIUM: 18x7.5 alloy / 225/40R18
MPG	MANUAL: 25/33/28 (city/hwy/comb) AUTO: 27/34/30 (city/hwy/comb)

### VELOSTER TURBO, R-SPEC

ENGINE	Gamma 1.6L turbo GDI 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	201 hp / 195 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.0:1
TRANSMISSION	6-spd manual / 7-spd DCT
R-SPEC	6-spd manual only
BRAKES	F: 12x1.0 vented; R: 10.3x0.4 solid
WHEELS/TIRES	18x7.5 alloy / 225/40R18
MPG	MANUAL: 26/33/29 (city/hwy/comb) DCT: 28/34/30 (city/hwy/comb)

DRIVETRAIN	FWD
STEERING	motor driv rack & pinion, col mt
SUSPENSION	F: McPherson strut w coils, twin-tube hydraulic gas shocks, stblzr bar R: Multi-link, twin-tube hydr gas shocks
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	166.9 in / 104.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.6 / 34.1 in
PASSENGER CAPACITY	89.9 cu.ft
CARGO CAPACITY	19.9 cu.ft
FUEL CAPACITY	13.2 gal
WEIGHT	MANUAL: 2701-2921 lb AUTO: 2734-2855 lb DCT: 2899-2987 lb

cloth, but the combined leather/cloth seating returns in the Turbo model. Ultimate trim adds a two-tone roof, 8-inch display with navigation added, full leather seats, and adaptive cruise control with the DCT model only.

We had a lot of nice things to say about the R-Spec's interior: the sporty instrument cluster, the overall clean layout, and the speedo and tach that had the zero sitting at bottom of the gauge. Ergonomics were good: all switches and controls were easy to reach and operate. The steering wheel leather was soft, and the thickness was perfect in our hands. The 6-speed manual's shifter had a natural hand position, and, as we own a Kia, all the steering wheel controls in the Hyundai are similar to those found in our Sedona, which makes using them second nature. Material quality and fit and finish were also impressive, but Hyundai has done a good job making sure the quality is high in all its vehicles. We also liked the 8-speaker Infinity audio system with center channel and subwoofer.

Another feature we semi-liked was the HUD, or heads-up display. We love that you can raise and lower it, so if you don't like it, it doesn't need to be in your sight line all the time. It's a large 8-inch screen, and displays information like safety, navigation and audio. You also can see the tach, speedo and gear when the Veloster is in Sport mode. We aren't big fans of HUD, but at least this one you can see even if you're wearing Polarized lenses.

We had a few nitpicks, as well. First, the shoulder seatbelt height adjuster is a fixed ring, so it can't be adjusted to the passenger's height. Normally that wouldn't be a problem if the passenger seat could be raised, which it can't. A manual seat height adjuster is only on the driver's side. We would love to have one for the passenger, since the

Veloster sits fairly low. My driving partner complained about windshield glare off the dash top, but since we wear polarized sunglasses, we never noticed it.

Although the Veloster looks like a two-door, it seats four and is also a hatchback, which means there's plenty of cargo room. At just shy of 20 cubic feet behind the second row, loading up won't be a problem. Drop the standard 60/40 split-fold second-row seats and there's even more space. The Veloster's cargo capacity beats not only its direct competitors, but also those larger in size, like the Toyota C-HR, Chevrolet Trax, Jeep Renegade and the MINI Clubman. The Fiat 500, at 7.0 cubic feet of cargo room, is a joke next to Veloster.

When it comes to power to move that cargo, the Veloster is highly capable. There are two engines offered, as we mentioned previously. The 2.0-liter I4 is standard in the base and Premium trims, and produces 147 horsepower and 132 lb-ft of torque. Both numbers are slightly higher than the previous model. The 1.6-liter GTDI four cylinder makes 201 horsepower and 195 lb-ft of torque, with the majority of that torque at a low 1,500 rpm. Fuel economy numbers are good: the 2.0-liter gets EPA estimates of 25/33/28 city/highway/combined for the manual transmission, and 27/34/30 for the automatic. For the 1.6-liter turbo, it's 26/33/29 for the manual, and 28/34/30 for the DCT 7-speed. On our drive, we noted a 29.3 mpg number in the Ultimate model with the 7-speed.

What good is power if you don't use it? So we did. There are three drive modes offered: Normal, Sport and Smart. Each mode changes the throttle response, steering feel and shift logic. Smart mode basically learns your shift logic, so the Veloster caters to your specific driving habits.

Both engines get drive modes, but only the automatic transmissions get the Smart mode. As you can probably assume, we spent most of our drive time in Sport mode.

The Veloster is fairly light, at 2,700 to 3,000 pounds depending on trim, so the turbocharged engine was really responsive. Because we drove mostly in Sport mode with quicker throttle response, the Veloster jumped brightly off the line. In the 6MT, the turbos spooled quickly and we felt no hesitation. Speaking of shifting, we liked the B&M shifter in the R-Spec. The throws were short and precise, and our only nitpick was that because the shifts were so close, sometimes we didn't know what gear we were in by feel. When we get a chance to spend more time with the shifter, and grow more familiar with it, that feeling should disappear. Shifting this transmission brings out all the reasons why a sporty car should always offer one. Paddle shifters are fine, but really living only comes through sliding a gearshift lever.

We also appreciated the Veloster's active engine sound feature on models with the GTDI engine. It enhances intake and exhaust powertrain sounds inside the cabin to add more fun to the drive. In normal mode, you hear a pleasant exhaust sound coming in the cabin. In Sport mode, that note is throatier with a touch more rumble. You can adjust the sound settings to provide even more enhancement if desired. The system is fun to play with, and fun to listen to while on the road.

Adding even more to the fun quotient is the suspension system, which has been changed drastically from the previous generation. The Veloster now comes standard with a multilink rear suspension, replacing the previous torsion beam. This is a huge difference when it comes to driving dynam-

ics. The Veloster's ride now is more compliant, planted, controllable, and responsive than ever before. In addition to the new IRS, front suspension modifications also were made: the Veloster now uses an aluminum front knuckle that saved almost six pounds of weight, and lower control arm geometry was improved. Where the previous model's suspension was a little too unforgiving for everyday driving, the new setup means you won't be punished if this is your commuter car.

Steering inputs also are a win. There is great feedback, and the weight is nearly perfect (especially in Sport mode). Steering enhancements for the gen-two model included moving the steering gearbox more than an inch closer to the centerline to enhance overall feel and braking stability. Speaking of braking, we never gave it a second thought, mostly because the brakes are strong and linear. They aren't grabby or over boosted, and just did their job, which allowed us to do ours: namely, having tons of fun driving.

Other driving impressions from the Veloster: we noticed a bit of tire noise (expected) from the summer tires and some wind noise at speeds above 80, but nothing that was unexpected. This is a sporty car, which means there should be some

noise that reminds you what you're driving.

If it's safety you care about, Hyundai has that covered in the Veloster as well. There are plenty of standard and available safety and driver-assist features like forward collision-avoidance assist and lane-keep assist, driver attention warning, and the blind spot and cross traffic alerts we mentioned previously.

Connectivity also is big for buyers in the segment, and the Veloster delivers with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, available BlueLink (now with a 3-year complimentary service that includes remote care, remote access, guidance by voice), and more. BlueLink also allows owners to remote start their car via Google Home, Amazon Alexa and smart watches as well.

To sum it up musically, the Veloster has a good beat that you can easily dance to. It's great to look at, fun to drive, and at the lower end, affordable for a single person who needs a dependable, reliable vehicle that won't suck the life out of them. If this isn't enough to keep you happy, wait until fall. Hyundai will be introducing an N version of the Veloster, with more of everything that makes this little three-door so much fun. As they say on the radio, stay tuned! ■

## TRIMS AND PRICING

<b>2.0</b>	
6-SPD MANUAL	\$18,500
6-SPD AUTOMATIC	19,500
<b>2.0 PREMIUM</b>	
6-SPD AUTOMATIC	\$22,750
<b>TURBO R-SPEC</b>	
6-SPD MANUAL	\$22,900
<b>TURBO</b>	
7-SPD DUAL-CLUTCH TRANS	\$25,400
<b>TURBO ULTIMATE</b>	
6-SPD MANUAL	\$26,650
7-SPD DUAL-CLUTCH TRANS	28,150

## COLORS / INTERIORS / EXHAUST

<b>PAINTS</b>	Ultra Black, Chalk White, Sonic Silver, Thunder Gray, Sunset Orange, Racing Red, Space Gray
---------------	---

<b>HIGH-CONTRAST ROOF</b>	Full darkened roof treatment available
---------------------------	--

<b>INTERIORS</b>	
2.0	cloth
<b>2.0 PREMIUM</b>	cloth/leather combo
<b>TURBO R-SPEC</b>	cloth
<b>TURBO</b>	cloth/leather combo
<b>TURBO ULTIMATE</b>	all-leather

<b>EXHAUST</b>	
2.0	single outlet
<b>TURBO / R-SPEC</b>	dual outlet

