

Rise of the machines

Are we all ready for self-driving vehicles?

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Showboats

Check out our car show calendar for a busy month ahead.

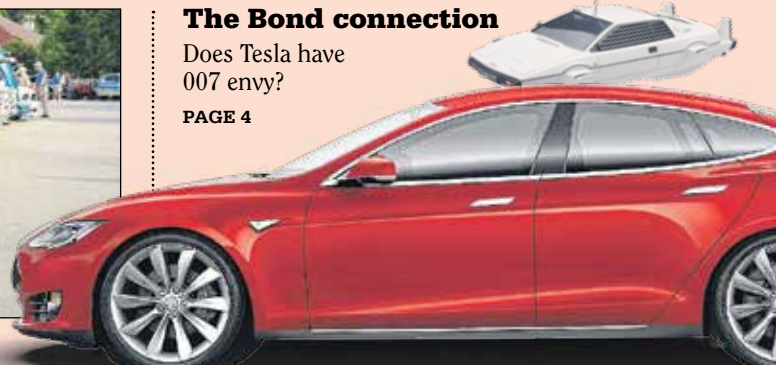
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The Bond connection

Does Tesla have 007 envy?

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Automotive

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Doppelgänger

The new Toyota Supra will share a platform with a certain German roadster.

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TEST DRIVE

Sand Beetle

2016 Volkswagen Beetle Dune

DAN LYONS | text
Special to the Times Union

The most important difference between the last generation Beetle and the current edition is the styling. Volkswagen pulled back hard on the cute factor. The classic, rounded form is now hunkered down. Doing so gave the car a more modern (and gender neutral) look, that broadens the Beetle's appeal to a wider audience. It's also makes a better canvas to work from when designing special editions.

That's the path that VW has taken since the second generation of modern Beetles debuted in 2012. The

2016 Volkswagen Beetle Dune

MSRP: \$25,995 (Dune coupe; convertible TBA)

2016 lineup continues to go with the flow, with VW rolling out a series of specials, including the Denim and this week's test car, the Dune.

Dune enters the lineup as a new trim level, which will slot in between the SE and SEL. It's offered in both coupe (available now) and convertible (on sale later this summer) versions. The hardtops carry an MSRP of \$25,995, plus \$820 in destination charges. The convertible's base price will be released as the on-sale date gets closer (the MSRP of the basic Beetle convertible is \$25,490).

Dune models are available in Pure White, Deep Black Pearl or Sandstorm Yellow. The latter looks to be the signature color for the car, as it dominates all of the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

FUN, BUT NOT CUTE. Since the last generation, Volkswagen has pulled back hard on the Beetle's cute factor, settling on a more modern look. The Dune special edition enters that lineup, available in convertible and hardtop.

company's PR photos. You can't blame them; the hue (which looks more like a blend of bronze and butter-scotch than it does yellow) wears well on the Beetle.

Inspired by the Baja Bugs of the classic Beetle era, Dune has rugged good looks. It's .6 inches wider and looks more so, due to the beefy wheel/tire combination. The wide, black wheel arch extensions are packed full with 18-inch "Canyon" alloy rims, shod with 235/45 all-season tires. Polished, aluminum sills with black inserts are a stylistic nod to the running boards of classic era VWs, and Dune graphics round out the side view.

Black honeycomb grillwork fills the openings in the new front fascia, while the rear view features a large

spoiler above and a new bumper below. Skid plates are fitted to both ends. Some interior cosmetics are specific to these models, and they're also the first Beetles to offer some new technology.

Outside colors carryover to the cabin with body color trim on doors and dash pad. It's a brighter look, though the only soft spots are where your elbows touch. Sport seats and steering wheel boast contrast stitching. All Beetle models get the MIB II infotainment system with USB connectivity.

The 6.3-inch touchscreen allows capacitive touch moves (pinch, swipe) familiar to smart phone and tablet users and acts as a portal to VW's Car-Net suite of features.

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