

Under glass, upside down

Jay Leno survives a stunt gone wrong in this 2,500-hp Hemi Barracuda.

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Highway to smell

Are they really paving roads with that?

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#SelfiesWhileDriving

Another bad idea New York is really good at.

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TEST DRIVE

Hot Hatch Adds Tech

2016 Volkswagen GTI S w/Performance Package

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Name notwithstanding, there's little sport to be found in a sport utility vehicle. My candidate for the best blend of sport and utility in one package is found in the market niche known as hot hatchbacks.

GTI — Volkswagen's perennial benchmark in this category — was fully redesigned in 2015. An infusion of technology for 2016 patches the few grumble points lodged against last year's model. The result is added entertainment in a car that's already very entertaining to drive.

2016 Volkswagen GTI S w/Performance Package

MSRP: \$24,995 (base) · As Tested: \$27,310

A very capable drivetrain is at the heart of the car's fun factor. The engine is VW's 2.0L four-cylinder, matched to a six-speed manual transmission or optional dual clutch gearbox (the automatic adds \$1,100 to the bottom line). The direct injection, turbo four generates 210 horsepower @ 4,500 r.p.m. and 258 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,500 r.p.m. Add 10 more horses to that number if you opt for the Performance Package (\$1,495), which also includes beefier binders fore and aft and a torque-vectoring, limited slip differential.

The engine offers a really appealing mix of power and efficiency. The low torque peak allows the car to roll off the line with a haste that belies the engine's size (0-60



After a full redesign last year, the Volkswagen GTI S returns for 2016 with an optional performance package, including a host of technology features and a direct injection, turbo-charged 2.0L four-cylinder engine (left).



in the low 6 second range), and the turbo boost kicks in with no perceivable lag. There's a hint of a growl when the engine is prodded, but it's otherwise quiet and never seems stressed.

Highway cruising is effortless, and the gearing is such that GTI returns very respectable mileage, for such a sporty car. EPA says you can expect 25 city/34 highway/28 combined with the manual; 25/33/28 with the DSG. I matched the combined number in my manual test driver. So few cars are equipped with a stick shift these days that it's always nice a nice surprise

to find myself in one. GTI's six speed has a crisp feel going from gear to gear, and the spacing between cogs supports a smooth power flow. If you are inclined to go automatic, VW's DSG allows you to do so while still retaining much of the fun of a manual, with snappy response to paddle shifts and rev-matched downshifts.

VW's perennial benchmark hot hatch features an infusion of technology for 2016.

These seventh generation Golfs are the first U.S. market VW's to be built on the company's new (MQB) platform. It's agile and

lively to drive, eager to hunt down corners and reassuring once you've found them. If you want to add a little

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