

Will you have to become a cyborg?

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TEST DRIVE

Safety Added

2017 Volkswagen Passat

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Last year's mid-cycle makeover for the Volkswagen Passat brought with it fresh sheet metal, leaving only the roof and door panels unchanged. The facelift is notable for its crisp front view, with tapered headlamps and a four-bar grille. Changes for the 2017 model year are mostly minor.



Entry level for the lineup is the "S," which carries an MSRP of \$22,440 — the same as last year. Next up is the R-Line (\$23,975), followed by the SE (\$25,495). An SE with Technology lists for \$27,995, while an SEL Premium like my test car starts at \$30,995. All of the foregoing run with VW's 1.8L turbo four-cylinder engine. The two remaining trim choices feature the 3.6L V-6.

2017 Volkswagen Passat
MSRP: \$22,440 • As tested: \$23,975

The V-6 SE with Technology (new for 2017) is tagged at \$29,295, while the top-ranging, V-6 SEL Premium arrives at \$33,995.

SE and R-Line (which was added to the Passat series last year) see an increase in standard equipment for 2017. Headlining the list is blind spot monitoring with rear cross traffic alert. Forward collision warning and autonomous braking are standard across the board.

When the seventh generation of VW's midsize arrived in 2012, it was upsized to better suit the space requirements of the American market. Front seat leg room measures out as mid pack (more than Camry, Malibu



THE PASSAT is Volkswagen's mid-sized sedan, with a segment-leading spacious rear seat, including separate air vents and heated seats. Last year's makeover gave Passat a crisper front view, with tapered headlamps and a four-bar grille.

or Mazda6, less than Fusion, Sonata, Altima or Optima). But Passat's back seat takes a back seat to no one in its segment, with 39.1 inches of leg room, as well as separate air vents, heated seats and a USB port on higher trims. (As someone who spends too much time in airplanes, the ability to stretch your legs out never grows old).

Trunk space is generous, at 15.9 cubic feet, which is the same as Optima, less than Sonata (16.3) and Fusion (16.0), and bests the rest of the class. Lift over height is comfortably low, and the rear seatbacks are split 60/40, for more cargo carrying options.

My test car was a top trim SEL Premium, and so equipped, Passat has a refined looking cabin; understated in the Germanic tradition, but well crafted. The

polished gray color of the faux wood trim in my test car I would exchange for something else (to me, wood trim looks best when brown and preferably not shiny), but I wouldn't trade the straight forward switchgear for anything. The deck of HVAC controls on the center stack are simple to use and minimally distracting.

The touchscreen above it is functionally fine, but the 6.3 inches display that was right in step when the seventh generation Passat debuted, is now competing with the near-tablet sized dimensions in some newer, competitive vehicles. And it doesn't respond to input from a winter gloved hand.

Last year's redesign included a new dash, steering wheel, instrument panel and console. The MIB II

Continued on page 2



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