



The 2012 Buick Verano is the brand's first entry into the compact segment with prices starting at \$22,595.

Buick Verano enters the compact segment quietly

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NEW YORK CITY: "I think this is the quietest car I've ever driven," my co-driver said.

One of the most experienced autowriters on the planet, he wasn't talking about a Rolls-Royce, a Mercedes-Benz or a Lexus, but the \$22,595 Buick Verano compact sedan.

The bane of auto engineers is 'sizzle', the sound the tires make on wet pavement. Because of its high-pitched hiss, sizzle is the hardest noise to keep out of the cabin.

Yet there we were at 50 mpg in the pouring rain in the base Verano where the sizzle was not just faint, but non-existent.

Another problem engineers face is the engine roar when you are at full throttle caused by the air going through the intake manifold. On the Verano, the manifold looks not unlike a saxophone, and in a sense, it is. With a number of interconnected chambers, the howl of the air is tuned out.

It's part of what Buick calls QuietTuning that involves 12 noise reduction and noise cancelling measures including: 5.4-mm-thick acoustic-laminated windshield and 4.85-mm-thick acoustic laminated side glass that minimizes wind noise; acoustic insulation material on both sides of the front steel dash panel and under the hood that reduce engine noise; and five layers of acoustic insulation material in the headliner, including a premium fabric on the visible outer layer that muffles wind noise.

How Buick got rid of sizzle was by using three layers of acoustic insulation material in the doors.

There's a lot more to QuietTuning than I have space to detail, but I have

to mention the heat-activated baffles in various pillars, crossbars and other structural members that are even designed to seal and close sections of the body structure that could transmit noise or allow water leaks.

The heat-activated baffles are inserted at strategic areas of the body structure and expand in paint ovens to fill the structural cavities.

You would think all this attention to noise reduction was being reserved for a top-of-the-line sedan, but the 2012 Verano is, in fact, Buick's first entry into the compact car segment and thus its most affordable model.

There will be four trim models starting at \$22,595 topping out with the full leather model at \$27,620.

All are powered by a 2.4-litre, inline four-cylinder engine producing 180 hp and 171 lb/ft of torque driving the front wheels through a six-speed automatic transmission.

Standard features include ribbon fabric seating, soft white ambient lighting, OnStar (six month free trial), StabiliTrak electronic stability control, ABS and Intelligent Brake Assist and 10 standard air bags. Automatic climate control, power windows and steering wheel radio controls are also standard.

Available as an option is Buick's IntelliLink system. It uses Bluetooth or a USB to connect a driver's smartphone to the touch-screen display radio expanding current Bluetooth and USB capabilities to allow smartphone control via voice activation and steering wheel-mounted controls.

In addition to Buick IntelliLink, a nine-speaker Bose sound system specifically engineered for the Verano's interior is available on all trim levels above the base level.

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