

Wheels

An Advertising Feature of the Economist & Sun and The Tribune

Caution: The new Beetle causes permanent grins

LAST CALL
1.9% LEASE FINANCE ENDS JUNE 30/98



1.9%
lease rate

Lease the BMW 328iA for its competitive lease rate of 1.9%. Drive the 328iA because no other luxury performance sedan can compare. At 0 to 100km/h in 7 spine-tingling seconds, this 2.8-litre, six-cylinder BMW engine is a powerful reminder that BMW originated sheer driving pleasure.

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The Ultimate Driving Experience.

BMW 328iA LEASE Equipment shown not available on all models. Lease rates are those offered by BMW Financial Services only and are available on approved credit. Monthly installments are \$499 (36 months) for 1998 328iA model. Examples are based on a down payment or equivalent trade-in of \$6200 for a 36 month term with optional buyback. A security deposit of approximately one month's rental will be required. Taxes, transportation, preparation (\$895), lease administration fee (\$475), licensing, registration and insurance are extra. A charge of up to .12 cents per kilometre applies over 24,000 per year. Dealer may lease for less. This offer applies to all new 1998 328iA models. Delivery must be taken by June 30, 1998. This offer may not be combined with any other offer.

\$499
MONTHLY PAYMENT

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or the vanity lights in the headliner. But unlike the Passat with its 150-hp light-pressure turbo, the new Beetle comes with a choice of a transversely mounted 2.0-litre four-cylinder twin cam gasoline engine producing 115 hp and 122 lb/ft of torque or 1.9-litre, four-cylinder turbo diesel injection engine making 90 hp and a hefty 149 lb/ft of torque.

My tester came in brilliant yellow with the five speed and a list price of \$19,940. It had a few options like the \$640 cruise control, but most of the things I'd want were standard like CFC-free air conditioning, anti-theft system, central locking, four-wheel disc brakes and ovoid halogen headlights that really did the trick.

The Beetle has the distinctive look of the original Bug, but with all the modern technology, said Reiseneker.

Inside the car is pretty funky with art-deco steering wheel and a single binnacle housing a minimum of instruments like speedo, rev counter and fuel level.

The instrument panel is the size

of a kitchen table top. The shifter, a stout stalk with round knob at the top, is perfect. The front seats adjust to anyone, but the back seats are definitely for the smaller of stature.

The trunk can be opened remotely from the key fob or a button on the door panel. The rear VW medallion swings up to the left

to reveal a little chrome handle that pops up just waiting to be used to open the trunk.

At night the instruments and the overhead clock have indigo backlighting. Couple that to illuminated red needle pointers and red markings on the stereo.

It's also much larger inside than the original Beetle, with a total of 96.3 cubic feet of inter-

ior volume. The back seats fold to increase the size of the standard 12 cu. ft. trunk.

Thanks to a set of decent 205/55, 16-inch Goodyear GA all-season tires, the power available from the 2.0-litre can be used to the fullest aided by a wheelbase of 2,512 mm (98.9 inches) and a fairly wide trade of 1,515/1,491 mm front/rear.

This is a car that likes to romp around and is at its best on tight, rolling secondary roads.

Hit a serious pothole or washout, as I did, and the independent suspension soaks it all up.

On super highways in the passing mode, the engine gets pretty buzzy as it approaches 4000 rpm. At normal cruising speeds, all is well.

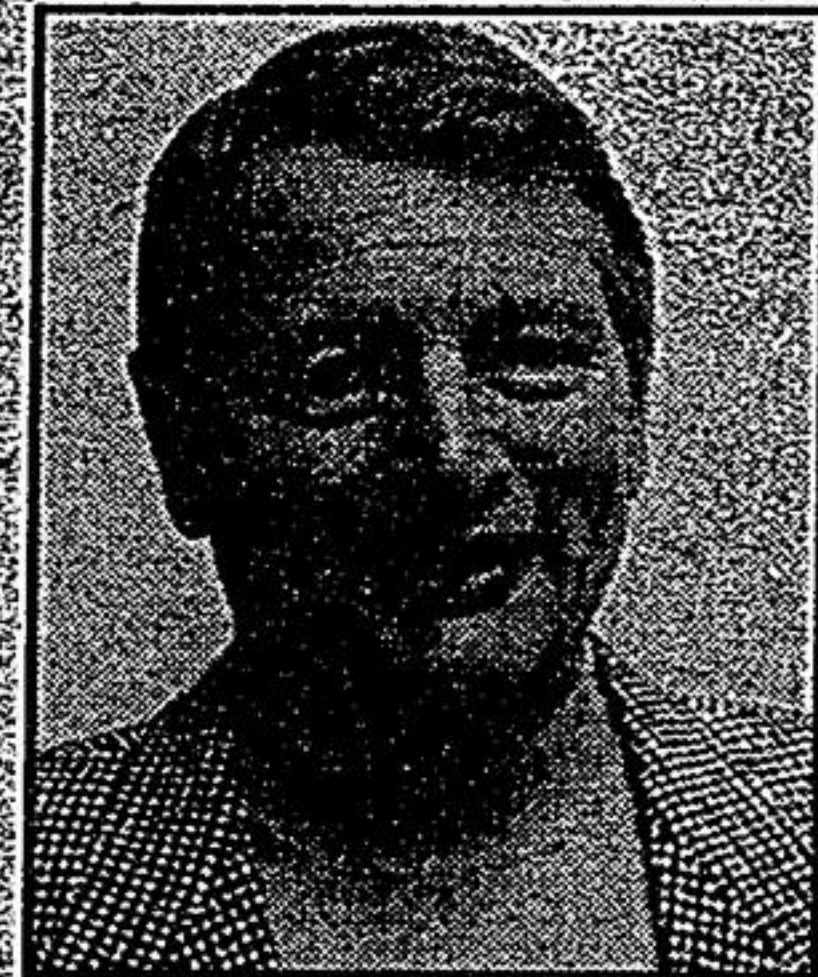
And all will be well in terms of fuel consumption, the gasoline engine with five speed returning 10.1L/100 km city, and 7.3L/100 km highway. The diesel five-speed is even better at 5.8L/100 km city, and just 4.5L/100 km highway. That's better than 48 miles to the gallon and one tank of diesel fuel will take you 700 miles.

And despite the brazenness of some people, the New Beetle certainly does provide grin factor for the driver.

And I must confess, again, that try as I did to find fault, I could not because I was having too much fun.

The New Beetle was as endearing as the romance with the Old Beetle has been enduring.

VW has taken the essence of the car that built the company and put a whole new lease on life, not just on the car, but for the future of the company as a whole.



Gerd Reiseneker, Greenbelt motors, Unionville.

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