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VW's Jetta offers pleasant ride with updated Jetta

It provides a lot of features and good gas mileage for a reasonable price.

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Volkswagen has proven with its new Jetta that it's possible to have a plain Jane car that can be both fun and comfortable. The 2.5 is that car.

Nothing about the 2.5 jumps out at you, but all of the pieces together make a pleasing if not exhilarating ride.

The first pleasing element is the base price of \$20,290 for five-speed transmission, air conditioning, heated seats, stereo, power windows, locks and mirrors, and pretty decent room for driver and passengers.

So many times, rear-seat passengers pay the price of being last to get in the car, but that's not the case with the Jetta. The rear seat has plenty of leg room. As long as the area is restricted to two people, you don't have a problem.

The five-speed manual transmission is nice and smooth, but shifts with authority. The engine is a plus: five cylinders pumping out 150 horsepower. That's a lot better than almost any four-cylinder engine, including the former Jetta base engine, a 115-horsepower four-cylinder.

What's nice about the German manufacturers is that they almost always load you up with safety equipment, the kind of stuff people are talking about these days.

This entry-level Jetta has electronic stabilization, anti-slip regulation, electronic differential lock, anti-lock brakes and side air bags and curtains.

Try finding that kind of content in other less-expensive cars. Heck, try finding it in many more-expensive cars.

One nice thing, at least as far as I'm concerned, is that the Jetta is bigger this time around. It was OK before, but why not go for a little bigger car as long as it still turns in decent fuel mileage? The Jetta is nearly 180 inches long, about the same size as an Audi A4.

Unless you step up to a higher trim level, the 2.5 makes do with a manually operated seat including that lever on the side that raises and lowers the seat height and angle. It's a matter of getting used to it.

The dashboard is where some people are going to be aghast. That's because it's like this is a dashboard from 10 years ago. It has big knobs and buttons for the stereo and each one is clearly marked. Need some more bass? Turn this dial. How about less treble? Turn

this dial. No fancy pants levers or obtuse markings that you don't understand or having to go into a menu to add more bass or volume.

The Jetta is front-wheel drive, and it's probably passable in the winter with the all-season tires, but making it 100 percent competent is as simple as installing four winter tires.

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