



# Autoist

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**A BUZZ  
IN CHICAGO**



# Autoist

Since 1955

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New Family memberships are \$26 for the first year, then \$20 per year for renewal. Add \$6 to these amounts for residents outside the U.S. Pay by check to VWCA, P.O. Box 154, North Aurora, IL 60542, or visit VWClub.org, click the "Membership" tab and use a credit card to join or renew.

## ABOUT THE AUTOIST

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► **COVER:** A white over blue ID. Buzz is parked in the VW display area at the Chicago Auto Show.

# Driver's Seat

BY CLIFF LEPPKE ✉ [leppke.cliff@gmail.com](mailto:leppke.cliff@gmail.com)

## A VW Super Bowl ad with soul

I'll take a stab at interpreting VW's latest emotional appeal to American motorists. VWoA's customer experience pro Rachael Zaluzec introduced it at the Chicago Auto Show.

The ad, dubbed "An American Love Story" — despite the wizardry of ad agency Johannes Leonardo and Lance Acord (director of "The Force") — strikes me as yet another TV spot mining VW's storied past to reboot its American relevance. I'll list a few: the

Atlas "America" with Paul Simon's "America," the People First Warranty "Rain," '60s trip with Joe Cocker's "A Little Help" music, the animated "The Last Mile" or perhaps Doyle Dane and Bernbach's 1993 "The Most Loved Cars in the World."

We've seen soulful automotive Super Bowl ads before.

Often, they're nostalgic tinged. The 2011 "Born of Fire" or "Imported from Detroit" Chrysler spot featuring Eminem, contrasts Detroit's architectural wonders and the refreshed ersatz luxury of the 200 midsize sedan. The Pentastar brand, today, offers minivans — not luxury cars.

The renewed Chrysler car, although improved, and later reborn yet again with Fiat architecture is now a footnote in the history of underachieving machines. You might recall Chrysler cooked the books overstat-

ing the 200's sales, which doused the flames of the 200's fire. Regardless, the Wieden + Kennedy ad briefly put Chrysler in the spotlight.

There's nothing aesthetically wrong with VW's "Love Story." VW's ad received an "A" from Northwestern's Kellogg School. Others claimed this ad zoomed ahead of other automotive Super Bowl ads with a 394% overall surge in traffic on Cars.com. Those interested in used Beetles and Buses rose more than 1,000 percent, as did traffic searching the ID.

Buzz (+5,527%). VW-related search traffic on Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader, likewise, increased. EDO Inc., an analytics company measuring search traffic when ads run on TV, said the 60-second VW TV spot got the third-highest engagement among advertisers in all industries.

Before the spot's Super Bowl broadcast during the third quarter

(a 75th reminder) with Neil Diamond's tune (Diamond jubilee?), VW released YouTube game ad teasers based on vignettes employed in the extended-length version I saw in Chicago. These

appear to be honest rather than faux confessions. We hear someone reminisce about a Bus and surfing. Another scene explores a GTI-based car show, while another features a young person driving his first car —

► **TURN TO PAGE 28**



VW's Rachael Zaluzec talks up "American Love Story," VW's Super Bowl ad flanked by a 1949 Beetle and the new ID. Buzz.

 • Watch the extended version of "An American Love Story": [bit.ly/49jPZW3](https://bit.ly/49jPZW3)

# Small Talk

VW + AUDI AT A GLANCE

## NEW & IMPROVED

**CAR NAMES PUZZLE:** As it rolls out its new generation of ID.-badged cars, VW marketing executives are trying to balance new nameplates with the traditional. VW's head of technical development, Kai Grunitz, told *TopGear* that the Golf name is safe, potentially putting the ID.3 at risk. "There is not enough space to have two or three different models fitting to the same customer," Grunitz said. Last year, *Auto-car* reported that VW was considering the Golf name for the ID.2, a small electric hatchback VW described as "spacious as a Golf and as inexpensive as a Polo."



## EV NEWS

**BATTERY TECH:** Volkswagen has developed a solid-state electric vehicle battery prototype that could charge faster and last longer than industry standards. Such batteries replace the flammable liquid found in most batteries today with a solid material, making them safer and smaller while allowing vehicles to drive farther on a single charge.

**PLUG AND CHARGE:** Long-promised "plug and charge" access to Electrify America stations is finally rolling out for the 2023 models, no longer requiring ID.4 drivers to start a charge with a phone app but instead simply plugging the unit into the car.

## COMPANY NEWS

**MEXICAN EVs:** VW is planning to invest \$750 million, the first of two packages, to transform its production plant in Puebla, Mexico, for EV manufacturing. Holger Nestler, president and CEO of Volkswagen Mexico, told *Forbes Mexico* that the goal is not only to produce EVs, but to build them more sustainably.

**BREAKING GROUND:** Just as the ID. Buzz was making its Midwestern debut in Chicago, Volkswagen's Scout Motors broke ground on its \$2 billion assembly plant in South Carolina. The VW subsidiary will produce next-generation all-electric pickup trucks and rugged SUVs at the new plant. Produc-

tion is scheduled to start at the end of 2026.

**NO PICKUP:** Talk that VW would finally sell a pickup to US customers was officially dashed when VW's Pablo Di Si told *Motor Trend* at the Chicago Auto Show that "it is not in the plans any more."

**STAYING THE COURSE:** Despite current depressed demand for electric vehicles, VW is still targeting the launch of 25 EV models in North America by 2030 but will adjust as the market shifts, VW's Pablo Di Si told Reuters.

## RECALLS

**SUCTION PUMP:** A faulty suction pump inside the gas tank could leak fuel, posing a fire risk, forcing VW to recall 260,000 vehicles from the 2015 to 2020 model years — Golf, GTI, Golf Sportswagon, Jetta and Audi A3 models.

## COLLECTORS

**PRICEY RABBIT:** *Car & Driver* researched its past 10Best lists and browsed BringaTrailer.com to see which past winners would have made a some money. The 1984 Rabbit GTI did well (base price 8,350. Bringatrailer.com reported a \$41,000 sale, an estimated average annual return of 4 percent.

# Retro Autoist

FROM THE VWCA ARCHIVES

## 10 YEARS AGO

**MARCH/APRIL 2014:** The world's 30 millionth Golf, in its seventh generation, rolled off the assembly line at the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg in June — a production record for the most successful European car ever. Production of the original Golf began in early 1974. Since then an average of more than 2,000 people have purchased a new Golf every day over the past 39 years. The 30 millionth car is a Golf TDI BlueMotion. (Pictured: seven generations of Golf.)



## 20 YEARS AGO

**MARCH/APRIL 2004:** With a new, limited edition model announced at the Chicago Auto Show, VW debuted the 2004 Satellite Blue New Beetle, which is music to the ears of audiophiles craving entertainment variety and digital quality. The special edition model features a radio with CD/MP3 audio capabilities, external portable audio jacks and a satellite radio receiver for XM Satellite Radio. The car has a starting MSRP of \$18,990.



## 30 YEARS AGO

**MARCH/APRIL 1994:** Many Beetle fans may have thought they had died and gone to heaven when they saw pho-

tos of Volkswagen's new Concept 1, introduced in January at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Unfortunately, Beetle enthusiasts will have to chill out for a least several years before Concept 1 becomes reality — IF it even does. *Postscript: Of course, it did, a 1998 model called New Beetle that rolled off the line in October 1997 to great acclaim and popularity.*

## 40 YEARS AGO

**MARCH/APRIL 1984:** The 123-inch Student concept car was among the completed projects shown for the first time from the \$26 million research center in Wolfsburg. The Student is a 2+2 model more than 20 inches shorter than VW's smallest car, the Polo. The Student weighs only 1,300 pounds and will return the equivalent of 47 mpg. *Postscript: It was but a dream.*



## 50 YEARS AGO

**APRIL 1974:** Feb. 17, 1972, was a day for celebration in Wolfsburg. Beetle No. 15,007,034 rolled off the assembly line. The silver-blue car, heavily decorated with flower arrangements, was driven straight to the factory museum, a milestone Beetle that represented the most manufactured automobile in the world, exceeding Ford's Model T.

## 60 YEARS AGO

**MARCH 1964:** the "Campmobile" kit — designed to fit into any Volkswagen station wagon or panel truck — can send the American family with a yen for travel and adventure out to the rugged country (or to the New York World's Fair) this year in plenty of inexpensive home-away-from-home comfort. The kit is available in six different models.



# ID. BUZZ PLAYS UP SLIMMED DOWN EVENT

The Windy City's annual auto extravaganza at McCormick Place is renowned for its spectatorship. The motor-vehicle menagerie is car-buyer or enthusiast catnip. Throngs of people bravely trek through cold weather, snow, sleet and ice to see the latest wrinkles in automotive fashion. This year the weather was balmy for early February. The automotive climate within the convention hall, however, was chilly.

But VW's highly anticipated 21st century bus, the electrified ID. Buzz, made its American-size wheelbase debut in November in Los Angeles and its debut in Chicago as it nudges closer to reaching the



US public later this year. (Read more about the Buzz on pages 10 and 13.)

Jennifer Morand of the Chicago Automobile Trade Association, now taking the show's reins, scolded the press for missing a factoid: this is a consumer show, an emphasis she noted at the Midwest Automotive Media Association's breakfast, minutes before the event's media preview began.

She further argued that Chicago's motoring maze still makes sense. It's about the people, people who delight in a spectacle — motivated car-shopping attendees, their engagement with it and their massive digitized impressions

By Cliff Leppke ✉ [leppke.cliff@gmail.com](mailto:leppke.cliff@gmail.com)

of it, which they share on a variety of media platforms. Unlike the Consumer Electronics Show, for instance, which is primarily a trade show, (increasingly the place for vehicle debuts), the Chicago show, created by an automotive trade association and its partners, is for the end consumer — likely a person who reads the AUTOIST.

Morand's admonishment rightly or wrongly communicated a truth. Yet, the elephant in the media preview ballroom — not MAMA's Favorite Affordable Vehicle, the Chevy Trax — was the show's shrinkage — roughly half of the convention hall's main floor was closed. And one-third of that space vacated when Stelantis jettisoned its participation — no more Camp Jeep. Subaru's Jumbotron/National Park exhibit, however, might suffice.

The show's first media day, likewise, suffered. Kia was the only company to theatrically un-



A media member takes a test drive of Honda's 40-pound Motocompacto E-scooter.

wrap new models — the revamped Carnival and K5. Want further evidence? The media platform for Kia's presser had a few TV photojournalists. I joined them in another spectator smudge of our era — enjoining the entrepreneurial multimedia press with their smartphones propped up with rods — like eyes in the skies, seated below us, to fill in the empty riser spots. Now, traditional and new media could both witness unobstructed vehicle reveals.

Kia also presented its Super Bowl ad. It's a variation of other Kia TV spots where its EV's >>

## Trek to Chicago means trying to keep things on the rails

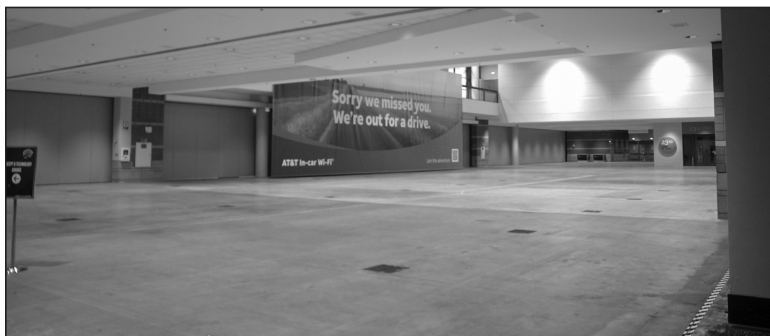
Amtrak's Hiawatha train from Milwaukee to Chicago's bustling Union Station served as my transportation to McCormick Place and the Concept and Technology Garage, an opportunity to check out vehicles a day before the Chicago Auto Show's press preview. This year the garage, in Garage, was the North Hall—usually the temple where GM, VW, Mazda, Hyundai and others present their corporately branded booths.

Chicago's Union Station has good Amtrak connections, though none heads toward McCormick. This station doesn't play nicely with Chicago's Metra and other trains. So one must hoof it to another transportation network's access point. Usually, I take the Metra electric train at the Van Buren Street Station. Bus transport is available; I'm seeking trains. That Metra plan changed due to an arrival delay.

Therefore, I opted for the Red Line, also known as the subway. A station at Jackson and State provides a \$3 fare that gets you to Cermak/Chinatown, where you can walk several blocks to the convention center.

The regional train experience in Chicago has changed. Neither the Metra nor the Red Line has manned ticket booths. So, you insert your credit card into a kiosk, punch some buttons and they spit out tickets. Let's say the height-challenged kiosks and my old eyes didn't find this simple. My transaction netted a \$3 fare with a \$10 receipt.

My return was problematic. I called the number on my ticket to inquire why my receipt was \$10. The rep told me this tab was from a prior transaction. Plus, my ticket was good for two rides. Not so, I found, when the turnstile at the Red Line station refused my fare. Another snag was the Hiawatha return train. I had a ticket for the 5 p.m. train, but caught the 3 p.m. For years, any ticket worked for any departure. Not so, the Amtrak agent scolded me. I rode in limbo — what's next, boot me off the train? I returned to Milwaukee's Intermodal Station without further complications. — *Cliff Leppke*



This closed space was one of the Chicago show's hallmarks.

# CHICAGO

mobile energy source creates a special moment for a family's shut-in.

Walkarounds ruled. Ford scheduled a vehicle "walkaround," repeating the details about the refreshed Explorer's features, which debuted before Chicago's show. This vehicle is built in Chicago. ... And so it went. Four other carmakers hosted walkarounds.

## Problematic Ultium

Perhaps the most engaging of these was Honda's invitation to drive its 40-pound Motocompacto E-scooter, which conveniently fits in the Prologue EV's aft quarters. The Prologue is Honda's first big stab at the full-EV SUV family hauler. It's built by GM in GM's Mexican assembly plant, sharing the Ultium architecture, the EV platform of vehicle batteries, motors and control systems. GM has issued a stop sale for models using that platform.

Vehicles with Ultium might have lemons. What I gleaned from Honda is this: the GM stop sale isn't problematic because Honda's Ultium production vehicle won't arrive at dealers until after GM resolves the snag. And curiously, the Prologue is an orphan; Honda previously announced it's pulling out of its GM alliance.

## VW gets a boost from new law

VW's Pablo Di Si, flanked by an Audi and ID. Buzz, spoke at the Economic Club of Chicago luncheon. Di Si began by celebrating his homecoming. He considers Chicago his hometown. Then, he discussed VW's investments in North America with an emphasis on VW's commitments to cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from its cars, plants and other practices. He wormed his way into the details of the Inflation Reduction Act — VW is the only foreign car brand producing a vehicle



Chicago was a homecoming for VW chief Pablo Di Si.

qualifying for the full \$7,500 tax credit, which eligible buyers can use as a down payment at any VW dealer. Plus, VW is currently developing its parts sourcing and manufacturing based on the IRA's incentives.

Other VWoA executives were visible during the press preview. I suspect they were drumming up dealer support for VW's new ad campaign and its upcoming deliveries of the ID. Buzz and ID. 7 sedan. Both were at the pre-show garage. Another ID. Buzz was at VW's booth. VW didn't display the ID.7 at VW's stand. One must read between the lines. While I saw two Buzzes and one 7, and only one of them at VW's showplace, those two extra EVs were in Chicago for behind-the-scenes purposes.

The last automaker specific event was at 3 p.m. — BMW's Innovator Reception — capped with boozy margaritas and hors d'oeuvres. I missed the innovator part; all I saw were the BMW vehicles and the alcohol-fueled respite.

Later that evening, I checked out Sweet Home Chicago, an automaker-sponsored shindig where vehicle reps and media mingle. It's an annual first-



That acclaimed Squareback.



media day nightcap. Live music and Pizano's pizza, cheesecake and an open bar set the scene for car talk. One conversation centered on my "famous" Squareback. There's an image of it on a website and other places. Meanwhile, others noted a recent Hagerty piece that claims excellent-condition Sciroccos now fetch \$60,000 and that most buyers are younger than baby boomers. Why? Well there's a younger generation who saw these wedgy wonders when they were kids. Now, they're motivated to get one.

For some, the show's shift from car-maker crafted and staffed lands of desire into a much tamer and less emotional bits of McCormick concrete into dealer-sponsored presentation of vehicles from their lots — Mazda, say — was nothing short of fabulous.

Chicago's show chopper— reducing its splendor to something closer to smaller auto shows like Milwaukee's — was in a sense relaxing. The usual manic rush to capture one press conference and then yet another, gave way to a self-guided stroll through automobility — letting you feast your eyes on Tesla's enormous Cybertruck in all of its stainless steel origami.

I would have joined in that assessment if automaker reps, and they were in Chicago, say VW's CEO, whom I briefly spoke to at VW's booth, were easier to find. And for those of us who must pay our own way to cover the show, we couldn't help but notice if it weren't for Nissan's investment in paying for its friends to fly in, stay and then depart Chicago, the number of us attending the show would shrink more than the topic of a Seinfeld episode.

VW chose the second media day for its news event and brunch. It didn't debut a new car but rather were three old ones and the new ID. Buzz. The Buzz technically wasn't a debut because VW previously presented it in Los Angeles.

The VW event, however, was about a new 75th anniversary advertising campaign dubbed "An American



Tesla's stainless steel origami called Cybertruck.



Traditional oil spots under a pristine Beetle.

Love Story." VW teased us, showing a long-form video. A 60-second version culled from this presentation, kicked off VW's anniversary-theme promotion during a third-quarter Super Bowl LVIII TV spot. It presents VW's journey, its unbelievable ascent from a Beetle sent to New York, three-quarters of a century ago, when Ben Pon tried to drum up dealer interest in the humble Bug. It didn't work — at first. But eventually, the small amphibian that crossed a big pond became the prince or king of small cars in the USA — the land of Detroit dishpans.

VW's booth presented three vintage VWs: a 1949 Beetle with traditional oil spots below its engine — the vehicle featured in VW's ad, a 1967 Microbus and Max the sort of 1964 Beetle. The center stage showcased the 1949 model on the left and the two-tone 2024 ID. Buzz on the right.

The video display behind these two machines featured visual snippets from the extended version of the soon to be shown "American Love Story." For example, just a few feet behind the Buzz, a red VW Rabbit Cabriolet straight out of "Remington Steele" or perhaps "Big Bang Theory" presented VW's Easter basket of funmobile. **VWCA**



# CHEERFUL AND FRIENDLY

VW's events specialist Bryan Reel demonstrated ID. Buzz and ID.7 gimmickry at the Concept & Technology Garage, part of the Chicago Auto Show open only to media members.

Two two-tone, blue-white and orange-white Buzz models shown in Chicago were European-spec vehicles with the longer of two wheelbases.



Bryan Reel

We'll get the long-wheelbase Buzz, targeted for later this year. Whether items like folding front seatback trays make it to our side of the pond isn't certain. The Buzz has a clean, cheerful, friendly nature. You could remove its pie-plate sized illuminated front VW emblem and nobody would be confused. It looks like a Volkswagen.

Its overhead panel changes

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At left, an ice scraper and a bottle cap opener, part of the removable BuzzBox console (below).

from opaque to translucent. Just fiddle with the overhead touch slider. I couldn't make it work. Bryan, however, could. And side-door glass features smaller flush-mounted windows that passengers can slide open. As with the ID. 4, only two driver-door window buttons are available. When you tap the space ahead of them, these become rear-window controls. In sum, this bus doesn't have scores of individual skylights or lots of pop-out glass. Nevertheless, the Buzz turns transportation into a spectator sport — for those inside the Buzz and those outside it.

The Buzz's front lid opens, revealing Styrofoam and the wiper-fluid reservoir. The lid itself is reinforced. VW put HVAC hardware in the front bay. This provides plenty of inside foot room. In fact, front-seat access is car-like, not cab-forward VW Bus-like.



Gear positioned behind the front lid allows for more foot room inside the ID. Buzz.

In the back, you can press a button and the hidden trailer hitch pops out. Then, you swivel it by hand into its locked and ready-to-tow position. The button's illumination shifts, confirming it's properly locked.

The “freestanding” BuzzBox console, between the front seats, is simple to remove. Just press the top's shiny button. Its upper-compartment bin has dividers. Each divider has another purpose. One, is a window scraper. The other is a bottle cap opener. This picnic basket-like device has one drop-down drawer at its rear and a slide-out one at its front. Two floor tabs secure it. You can fold them flat for egress. Pull them up, place the console on them. It latches itself.

The aft pews slide. The movable rear-most seats recline slightly. The divided middle chairs each slide forward and kneel. »

## ID. BUZZ

Release levers are found atop the seats. Each lever assembly has a window. It turns red when unlatched. I'd say third-row access is convenient. VW placed vintage-style assist straps on some door pillars. You can lower the third-row headrests for improved aftward views. They overlap the seatback, creating an uncomfortable bulge. This should encourage riders who sit here to raise them.

The two-tone interior color scheme and cover-like door-card design add up to a very appealing atmosphere.

Another bus, displayed at VW's show booth, had rear-cargo area shelving with two-foldable storage boxes. Another thoughtful touch is the vehicle's seat tracks. They're recessed into the floor. This should make cargo hauling easy. And it cuts the trip hazards found in some multiple-row SUVs.

VW's design staff couldn't resist decorating their decorations with whimsical graphics. Some seats repeat the Buzz's silhouette on their side panels. The BuzzBox has world-map graphics on the sliding drawer's sides. Each side depicts a different hemisphere. And those exterior rear pillar "cooling" slots are only visually cool. They're eye candy.

### A quick look at the ID.7

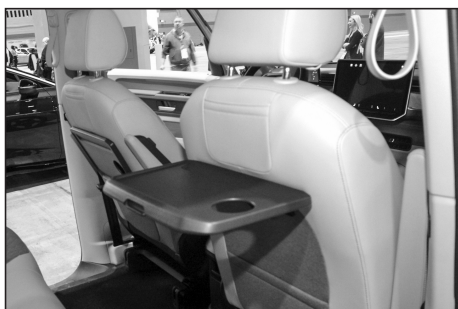
The ID.7, which wasn't shown at VW's show booth, features VW's new dashboard displays. The instrument cluster is rather small because a head-up display provides driving info. Below the infotainment screen you'll find a wider illuminated touch-



Kneeling seats make for easy access to the third row.



The slide-open window within a window.



Rear tray is shown on the Euro-spec ID. Buzz.



Thanks to the head-up windshield display on the ID.7, the traditional dash readings have been downsized. The drive shifter stalk is seen at right.

slider control area for temperature and volume. Previously, this setup wasn't illuminated. Expect this update later this year on the ID.4. The Buzz has it too.

VW also moved the "transmission" control to a steering-column stalk on the right. This change requires the wiper controls on the turn-signal stalk. **VWCA**



## CHICAGO AUTO SHOW



\* AUTOIST correspondent Tom Janiszewski, a self-described future co-owner of the ID. Buzz, did too. He got reaction from visitors checking out the new VW.

After the media preview, I returned to the show on Valentine's Day and was able to see and hear public reaction to the ID. Buzz. All were positive.

People commented on how comfortable the front seats were. The Buzz kind of has that same deep dashboard/far-away windshield situation as in the New Beetle. I remember reactions to that in the New Beetle, and was waiting to hear the same comments from people, but heard none.

People loved the adult-sized third row seats and how easy it was to get into them. Adults who climbed in were surprised at how comfortable it was. The backrests had two, maybe three pitch settings, and I made sure that those backrests were set as far back as they would go for the best first impression.

I could really tell that a lot of people were used to looking at

three-row SUVs because many seemed to be having a revelation about how much more room the van had in back over the SUVs.

There were lots of positive comments on the folding tray tables in the backs of row-one seats for those in row two. I didn't have the heart to say we probably won't get those in the US for safety reasons.

People commented a lot on the smartglass roof, which was in the opaque setting. It reminded me of frosted glass one would see in old ambulances. I cannot wait to see how warmly lit the interior will be out in the daylight. I would have loved to see what it looks like in the transparent setting. Because the keys weren't near the vans, we weren't able to see the smartglass operation.

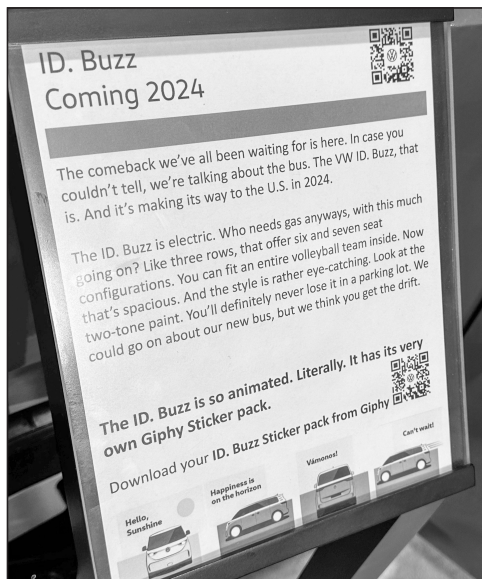
I'm curious to see if VW or aftermarket camper outfitters will remove the glass panel to fit a camper poptop. The opening >>



Seats were endorsed for their comfort.

By Tom Janiszewski ✉ [volkstom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:volkstom@sbcglobal.net)

## ID. BUZZ



An ID.-branded roof rack adds to the storage options and visions of a pop-top camper some day. The adjoining sign advises that with the ID. Buzz's two-tone paint, you'll never lose it in the parking lot.

would be huge as that glass panel takes up at least 75% of the roof's total length.

The styling was a hit. I could hear a lot of people talking about how it reminded them of the old ones.

Two Buzzes were on display, and both were open to the public. At times, you needed to wait your turn to hop in. Amusingly, VW also had an ID.7 on display — the first time I'd ever seen one — and it was a ghost town around that car.

I was THRILLED both Buzzes here were painted in fun colors — white over blue, and white over orange (very similar to Habanero Orange that's been available on at least Jettas and Tiguan).

A couple people made comments that they wished it weren't an EV and would prefer a hybrid or ICE op-



For a three-row vehicle and all the seats upright, that's some decent rear storage space.

tion. Other than that, I didn't hear any negative reactions at all.

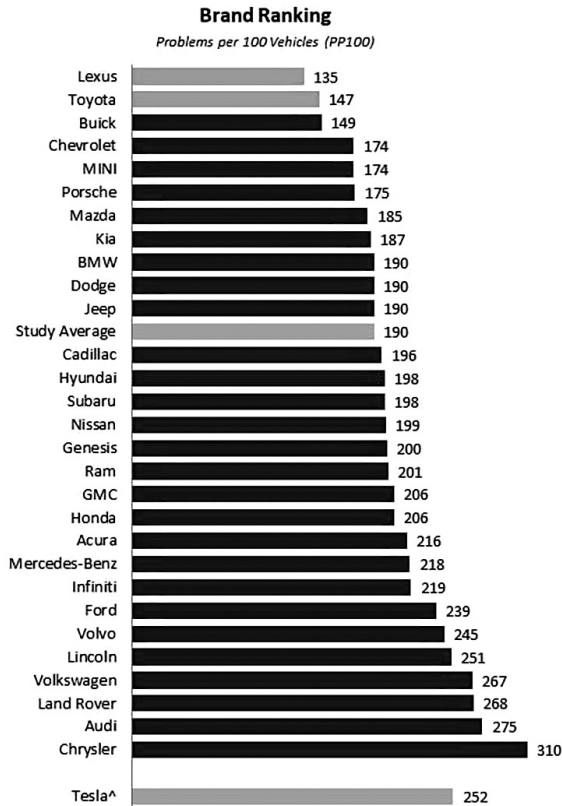
This was the first time I'd seen and been in the long wheelbase version. Having been in both the short and longer versions, it's amazing how much more room that 10 inches provides. All of that width was added between the axles, and the power sliding doors gained pretty much all of that 10 inches.

The wider doors not only make it possible to access that third row, but also

make getting into the second row a little easier. Even with the third row in place and with people in them, there is still cargo space behind the third row (not a huge amount, but a LOT more than any midsize three-row SUVs I've seen).

► TURN TO PAGE 30

**J.D. Power**  
**2024 U.S. Vehicle Dependability Study<sup>SM</sup>**



Lexus ranks highest among Premium brands.  
 Toyota ranks highest among Mass Market brands.  
 Tesla is not rank-eligible because it does not meet study award criteria.



Taos

# SATISFACTION

*New surveys show it's hard to get with VW and Audi models*

**C**onsumer Reports followed up its auto reliability rankings with its 2024 Owner Satisfaction scores. CR surveyed people owning 330,000 vehicles. It averaged data from the 2013 through 2021 model years plus some 2024s.

VW scored 28th out of 29 brands. Only 51% of VW buyers would purchase their VW again. VW proved least satisfying in “Driving” and “Usability.” VW’s Taos and Atlas scored lowest in the former while the ID.4 scored low in the latter. Audi did worst in “Cabin Storage.” The Taos and Jetta were on CR’s 10 least satisfying rides: only 38% of Taos owners would do it again; 47% said the same for the Jetta.

Meanwhile, J.D. Power’s 2024 U.S. Vehicle Dependability Study mirrored *Consumer Reports’* assessment, slotting VW near the bottom of its rankings (more on that later).

CR said the Taos and Jetta, which are basic lowest-cost models in a class known for stiff rides, had less appealing interiors and loud cabins. People were especially displeased with the Taos’ irregular acceleration. I found the front-drive Taos sluggish but not particularly bad in testing. The 4Motion all-wheel-drive I sampled in February sometimes took off too quickly, or stuttered when awaking the engine from its idle-stop mode.

Plus, during one cornering move the Taos bumped through three gears when it should have stayed in one until I exited the corner. The Taos decelerates with obvious multiple downshifts. This induces several braking effects. I suspect people complain about this behavior because most >>

By Cliff Leppke ✉leppke.cliff@gmail.com

## SURVEYS

vehicles “coast” when you remove your foot from the throttle pedal.

Because the AWD Taos combines a turbocharged engine, auto-stop feature and its automated manual transmission (DSG), I find the obvious shifting, a DSG trait, acceptable. I drive a manual transmission, so it’s not much different. But the rather sudden acceleration and way too many shifts isn’t cool.

On another outing the Taos jolted when accelerating from a stoplight, locking the seatbelt. This, the uneven braking effects caused by tranny downshifts and gear shifting stumbles when cornering are worse than any DSG VW I’ve driven before.

I’d say those who buy the Taos after a brief test drive — especially if it’s the FWD version with conventional automatic — might find this VW’s spastic tranny behavior disconcerting. It performs like a novice learning to drive a stick.

### Power’s survey buries VW, Audi

Meanwhile, J.D. Power’s 2024 U.S. Vehicle Dependability Study placed VW and Audi near the bottom. According to Power, the average number of problems per 100 vehicles is 190. Toyota topped the mass market with 147 while VW had 267 and Audi 275. Chrysler was the worst at 310.

Power says those who drive BEVs or PHEVs report more problems than those with gas vehicles.

At three years of ownership, 39% of BEV owners said they replaced tires in the previous 12 months — 19 percentage points higher than owners of gas-powered vehicles.

Rapid tire wear is not uncommon with the heavier battery-powered vehicles because of their weight, in addition to the tendency of hot-foot drivers to abuse

the cars’ rapid acceleration capability.

In the case of the ID.4, many 2021 models were shod with Bridgestone Alenza tires, many of which were being replaced early in ownership because of rapid wear, according to many voices on social media.

Automotive infotainment systems, overall, proved the biggest bug of all. Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity proved a major headache, as did built-in voice recognition. I found a stark contrast between the 2023 Hyundai Santa Fe I sampled and the 2024 Taos. The former paired my phone and found locations via voice capably — including for my workplace address. The Taos, in contrast, gave me the wrong city for my home address. Plus, after pairing my phone wirelessly, the Taos wouldn’t pair it again when I plugged it into the USB port for charging.

*Automotive News* reported that when Milwaukee’s temperature dived to 5 degrees in January, a Ford Lightning owner discovered his range plummeted nearly half, to 160 miles. Meanwhile, Chicago TV stations reported Tesla charging station backups. The chargers worked. But Tesla owners rushed to charge due to range loss. Adding to the snafu is the fact that cold-weather charging takes longer — at least 10 percent. One reason is an EV’s batteries must be warmed before charging.



One of the typical software glitches on a 2021 ID.4, posted to social media — a service advisory that was out of this world.

Recurrent, an analytics firm that offers EV advice other information at [recurrentauto.com](https://www.recurrentauto.com), says when a battery is stressed from extreme weather, it’s not able to charge as fast as usual. Slow charging on a Level 2 system often works better than a public fast charger but even in warmer conditions it takes more time.

Recurrent used data from more than 10,000 U.S. vehicles and tens of thousands of data points to assess EV energy usage. It



found the 2021 VW ID.4 had the greatest range loss in freezing temps — off 46%. Audi's E-tron, however, had the least — down 16%. Vehicles with heat pumps, which the Audi has but ID.4 doesn't, fared better in Recurrent's assessment. Tesla, likewise, uses heat pumps. Its models lost 24% range.

## VW's 4th quarter sales spurt

Volkswagen of America reports sales surged during late last year. Q4 sales were up nearly 40% — 96,489 vs. 68,970 for 2022. For all of 2023, VW reports it delivered 329,029 vehicles — up 9.3% vs. 2022. One reason for the improved numbers, according to VW insiders, is parts availability. VW's suppliers provided a steady stream of key components. Therefore, VW didn't have to throttle back output of, say, Jettas to make Tiguan.

When you compare quarterly with year-over-year results, you'll notice the biggest Q4 gains were Atlas (30,139 vs. 15,826) and Jetta (16,852 vs. 5,276). The Golf family posted an increase (2,519 vs. 1,116), as did the ID.4 (10,634 vs. 9,439).

For 2023, you'll notice the ID.4 sales were 37,789 vs. 20,511, Jetta 47,408 vs. 38,260 and Atlas 95,675 vs. 82,030. The Taos and Tiguan, however, had lower sales during 2023. VW's best sellers were Atlas, Tiguan, Taos and Jetta.

Meanwhile, Audi says 2023 was its best U.S. sales year ever in the States: 228,550 units delivered.

Worldwide, VW sold 4.87 million of its branded vehicles. The VW Group sold 9.24 million.

## ID.4 qualifies for full federal tax credit

VWoA confirms many 2023 and 2024 ID.4s are eligible for the full \$7,500 Federal Tax Credit. Models with SK On battery components qualify and are typically all-wheel drive models. ID.4s built with Korean-

sourced SK batteries miss out on the credit.

During 2024, eligible consumers can apply the tax credit as a down payment at the point of sale.

## In Europe, VW remains on top

On the continent, full-EV demand is waning, says Peter Siga for *Automotive News Europe*. Toyota's consistent focus on hybrids has propelled it to the top ranks of European sales. Toyota is now the second-best selling brand in Europe. It sold 828,484 vehicles in Europe, an increase of 8% — the market overall was up 13 percent. Audi took third place, while VW retained its top-spot grip.

The majority of Toyota's sales were hybrids. They're cheaper than full-electric vehicles. VW's 2023 Euro sales were 1,357,139 units, Audi 733,176. SUVs were 51 percent of all sales. Tesla's Model Y was Europe's best-seller overall. VW's ID. 4 was a segment leader, leading 12 of 21 segments. Its T-Roc is Europe's top-selling small SUV and its convertible version the best-selling convertible.

An examination of the leaderboard shows the VW Golf (184,454) ahead in compact cars, VW's Passat (73,258) in midsize models, T-Roc (194,265) in small SUVs, Tiguan (174,387) in compact SUVs, ID.4 (85,343) in midsize SUVs, Caddy (31,241) in compact vans and VW Transporter (52,525) in midsize vans. The ID. Buzz's total was 14,806.

Audi's A3 won the compact premium prize. Its A6 bested the large premium class. Tesla Model Y took premium midsize SUV (255,235), Model 3 (99,998) midsize premium.

VW Group deliveries (all of its brands) were 3,324,705, well ahead of Stellantis, which took No. 2. VW-branded models topped the chart, followed by Toyota, Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Renault, Skoda, Peugeot, Kia and Dacia. **VWCA**



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# 2024

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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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OLD SAYBROOK: CARDONE AND DAUGHTER AUTOMOTIVE, 4 CUSTOM DRIVE, 860-664-0727, cardoneanddaughter.com, AC, SERVICE & REPAIRS

#### ILLINOIS

DOWNERS GROVE: SPAROMOBILE, 503 OGDEN AVE., 630-963-8410, IMPORT PARTS

EVERGREEN PARK: BEETLE CRAFT SPORT TUNING, 9535 S. PULASKI RD., 708-422-7548, beetlecraft.com, L-10 AC

OAK LAWN: G&H IMPORT AUTO PARTS, 9734 S. CICERO AVE., 708-422-9272, AUTO PARTS & ACCESSORIES

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FORT WAYNE: WERNER'S GARAGE, 7804 FRITZ ROAD, 260-489-9783

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WATERFORD TOWNSHIP: MUNK'S MOTORS, 3080 W. HURON ST., 248-681-8081, munks.com, AC, INDEPENDENT VW SPECIALISTS

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# SUPPORT THE DEALERS WHO SUPPORT VWCA



# What happens when the repair bills start to pile up

**W**e've all seen the signs from the 1980s VW ads that proclaim, "It's not a car; it's a Volkswagen." Although a clever saying, I believe it has a deeper meaning for us Beetle owners. On Feb. 12, 2010, I bought my Final Edition Beetle convertible. It was a joyous occasion, the car being my favorite color combination: light blue with white interior.

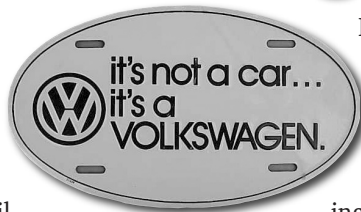
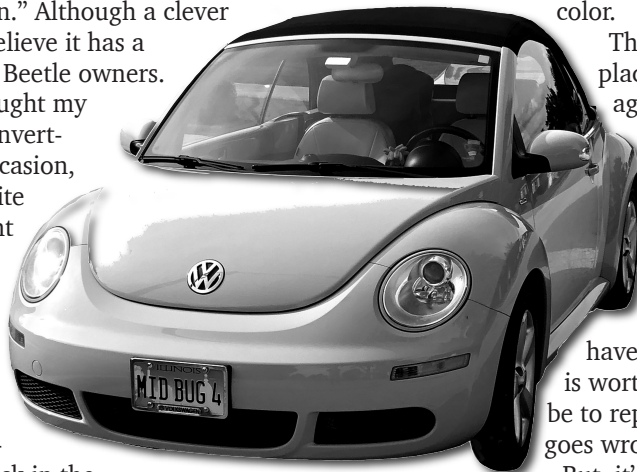
During the past 14 years it has been a very reliable and enjoyable car. I love the versatility of a convertible, allowing me to bask in the sun. The white seats don't get hot when I leave the top down as dark seats would. The five-cylinder engine is moderately peppy and economical. Wherever I go, I get smiles and waves. It is the perfect car for me.

Recently, the engine developed an oil leak resulting in the replacement of the vacuum pump and seals, and the timing chain cover gaskets. The bill was pricey, but the car has been such a joy and otherwise trouble-free.

A little while later, the left rear spring broke, requiring replacement of both rear springs and shocks. The thought of getting rid of the car occurred to me, but it has been such a good car that I rationalized that it's cheaper to fix it than to buy a new car. Besides, VW doesn't make either a Beetle or a convertible anymore.

I looked online for convertibles, and found that Audi, BMW and Mercedes still make them, but they are quite pricey. Back to my rationalization that it's

cheaper to repair than to buy a new one. Plus, I have a 14-year history with this car, and it's my favorite color.



Then the brakes needed replacement. Considering the car's age, it seemed reasonable that it would need new brakes at this point. Unfortunately, the calipers were weeping, thereby making for an expensive brake job. Repairs of the oil leak, the springs and shocks and brakes now have come close to what the car is worth. A logical conclusion might be to replace it before anything else goes wrong.

But, it's not a car; it's a Volkswagen. It draws smiles from passers-by, and it brings me much joy. I bought my first New Beetle in 2000. That means that I have been driving New Beetles for 24 years!

There's a comfort, much like wearing your favorite pair of shoes, regardless of their age. We Beetle owners (vintage or New Beetle) feel an emotional attachment to them. From a rational perspective, it makes no sense to spend a lot of money on restoring a vintage Beetle that originally cost under \$2,000 brand new, or paying more for repairs on a New Beetle than it might be worth.

But, it's not a car; it's a Volkswagen. Only Beetle owners would understand.

As I cruise with the top down and enjoy the warmth of the sun, and exchange waves with other Beetle drivers, the feeling can't be described. We know there is a special connection between Beetle owners and their cars.

It's not a car; It's a Volkswagen! **VWCA**

By Steve Midlock ✉ [SMidlock@stfrancis.edu](mailto:SMidlock@stfrancis.edu)

# The Frontdriver

BY RICHARD G. VANTREUREN ✉rvant1951@gmail.com

## Half a century already?

Can this be? In my memory, hearing about a new, “modern” Volkswagen spotted in Germany seems a recent memory. Yet as you read this, VW is celebrating 50 years of Golf, the model we came to know as Rabbit in its early years, having been rolled out five decades ago in March 1974.

To mark the start of the anniversary year, the company hit the Bremen, Germany, auto show with a showroom-perfect Golf I. Alongside was something we’d never heard of, the unique EA 276 concept vehicle — the predecessor to the Golf that was developed in Wolfsburg.

Sure easy to see why they hired the Italians to perfect the styling! The press release stated the 276 was powered by a Beetle air-cooled engine, yet the photos don’t seem to reflect that. We’d heard of the K-70, a production sedan bearing the lollipop, produced right after VW

bought Audi. It resembled the car we knew as the Audi Fox and its familiar in-line four. But the EA 276 sure appears to be a world away from what we came to know and love.

The generations photo here says a lot about automo-

tive consistency — or lack thereof. Of course, there is no space to examine the behind the scenes struggles behind each iteration.

Readers of this column might remember reporting on various attempts to electrify the Golf, code-named Type 17. These ranged from just Frankenstein-like transplants of

electric motors and huge lead-acid battery racks, to state-of-the-art electric systems seemingly so sophisticated for their day.

One wonders what happened to some of those promising technologies. Somehow an e-Golf was actually produced and sold, presumably in California as we never saw one east of the Mississippi.

In the end there must



The crude-looking EA 276 concept vehicle imagined a post-Beetle world for Volkswagen.

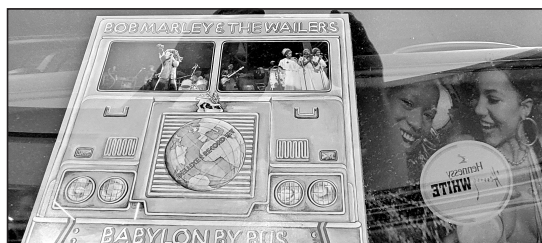
have been overwhelming engineering reasons to start with a clean sheet of paper to support the battery pack that led to the new car, the ID.4, weighing the equivalent of a Touareg. So following the diesel scandal, the company's headlong rush to lithium actually makes the 50th anniversary bittersweet. Impractical to electrify to current specs, this latest generation



of Golf – possibly even the GTI and “R” special edi-

tions offered and being rolled out – may be the last. It was great knowing them. **VWCA**

## Restaurant honors Bob Marley's memory



A restaurant inside Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport has become a destination for fans of the late Bob Marley, the Jamaican reggae performer (pictured, far left) who died in 1981. Sixteen years in the making, the eatery, called Bob Marley's One Love Restaurant, opened in summer 2023. Not only is it a restaurant but a sanctuary of Marley's memory, featuring memorabilia, album covers, images and no less the iconic VW Bus he once drove. Photos by Fred Frank

# ID. Insight

BY TODD ALLCOCK ✉ tallcock@aol.com

## Dragged through the FUD

Anyone with a social media account is probably aware that what you see is curated by your past clicks, likes, dislikes. Your news feeds are tailored to your past views. So, as an electric vehicle owner and enthusiast, it's no surprise my feeds are filled, (actually overfilled — I really need to broaden my interests!) with the latest articles and news stories about electric vehicles and electric vehicle infrastructure.

And judging by what I'm reading lately, I must have been crazy to ever buy one, much less have replaced both my wife's and my cars with electrics! What a nightmare owning one of these things must be, if I only went by my current news and social media feeds and not by months of research and 3½ years of personal ownership experience!

Early in the new year I was regaled with headlines like...

- "EV Sales Slowing, Leaving an EV Pile Up On Car Lots"
- "Alarm Bells Sound on Slowing Demand for Electric Vehicles"
- "Hertz Reducing EV Fleet Due to Low Demand, High Costs"
- "Tesla Disaster as Cars Won't Charge in Freezing Cold"
- "Foreign Dictators Love Our Electric-Vehicle Mandates"

Geez, Google, I just wanted to see what the weather was going to be like today!

I get it. The purpose of a click-bait title is to get you to click, and many of these are straight news stories that are actually far less doom-and-gloomy as their headlines would suggest. (Well, except for the last three; those were straight up "opinion" hit-pieces full of outdated or blatantly incorrect data published

by mainstream, albeit very conservative, news sources.)

So what's going on? Who is behind this "FUD" (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt)? Is there a vast conspiracy to delay or derail the transition to electric vehicles? Yes and no. "Vast"? Sure. "Conspiracy"? Probably not. Human beings are by and large selfish creatures who act in their own self-interest. If you and your family's livelihood is dependent on your job at ExxonMobil, it's no secret that the success of EVs is probably not the best thing for you. Nor would it be surprising for the execs at the company to hire lobbyists to slow or delay the passage of laws that promote EVs, or oppose laws and programs expand-

ing public charging infrastructure, just as it's no surprise the National Dairy Council would fund lobbying to ban the use of the word "milk" from almond or soy beverages. Nor is it surprising that lawmakers

in oil- (or milk-!) producing states like Wyoming (or Wisconsin!) would introduce legislation to protect their local industry cash cows (sorry!)

It is equally unsurprising that news outlets would publish scores of anti-EV stories and op-eds when those, based on the number of views and comments those articles produce, clearly increase viewer, reader and most importantly, advertiser engagement.

Clearly it isn't public service to save consumers from making a bad purchase decision. After all, the media didn't work nearly this hard protecting us from the Pontiac Aztec, did it?

As an EV enthusiast, I'm surprisingly OK with this trend. It means that EV adoption is increasing, rapidly, and it's making some people nervous. There was



KANSAS CITY STAR

no torrent of anti-EV articles 10 years ago when the most popular EV was a \$30,000 Nissan Leaf with 75 miles of range, and EV sales were still counted in the tens of thousands. They weren't a threat to "Big Oil" or "Legacy Auto" (or, judging by articles I've read recently, democracy itself, apparently.)

But now? About one in 13 new cars sold in the United States last year was electric, beating the prior year's EV sales by nearly 50%. EV prices are dropping, which will increase sales even further. A market once "owned" by Tesla is seeing significant penetration by legacy car makers like Ford, GM, and Volkswagen. One in 12 cars sold by VW worldwide in 2023 was an EV, and one of every eight VWs sold in the USA last year was the all-electric ID.4.

There's no stopping this electric train now, so the opponents of the energy transition can only do their best to slow it as much as possible and try to delay the inevitable.

The US is still far behind many other countries in EV adoption, and so is our anti-EV FUD; European and UK news outlets ramped up their FUD to a fever pitch over the last year or two as the percentage of EV sales there increased from the single to double digits, and it isn't stopping EV adoption. It's just part of the normal human reaction to change. We seem to hate it when nothing changes, and hate it even more when things change too quickly!

On the bright side, the additional anti-EV stories fuel dedicated EV enthusiasts to work harder to correct the misinformation and spread the word. Web-

sites like StopBurningStuff.com, created by British actor, comedian and EV evangelist Robert Llewellen's Fully Charged Show, and consumer education websites like PlugInAmerica.com and NormalNow.com (the latter funded by VW as part of its "penance" for Dieselgate) sit alongside government websites like the Department of Energy's FuelEconomy.gov and Energy.gov/vehicles pages to set the record straight about the pros and cons of electric vehicles.

So, I won't bore you with a point by point "debunking" the many misconceptions and outright untruths in the articles and op-eds I mentioned. You are welcome to read them yourself and believe, or not believe, anything they say. But whichever you decide, next time you're out car shopping, don't do yourself a disservice and automatically dismiss electric vehicles based on some click-bait articles or memes your crazy uncle shared with you on Facebook.

Get behind the wheel of a truly excellent electric vehicle, like the

Volkswagen ID.4, and take a test drive, or maybe talk to some EV owners at an EV Ride and Drive event near you (which the Plug In America website can help you find.) Or just drop me an email. I'll happily talk your ear off about the ID.4 and EVs if given the chance!

In the meantime, I'm going to relax, pour myself a glass of almond non-dairy plant-based beverage, grab my phone to check the news and maybe read about how electric cars and fluoridated water are actually communist plots to destroy America. [VWCA](#)

The screenshot shows a Fox News Opinion article. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'FOX NEWS' and categories like 'U.S.', 'Politics', 'World', 'Opinion', 'Media', 'Entertainment', and 'More'. The article title is 'I was stranded in an EV at midnight. Progressives don't want you to know about my nightmare'. Below the title is a sub-headline: 'Biden and his fellow Democrats just can't resist forcing EVs on us. But America not even close to ready for the clean energy utopia they're promising us'. The author is 'OPINION By Jason Rantz · Fox News' and it was published on 'January 23, 2024 5:00am EST'. There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, X, YouTube, and Email. Below the text is a video player with a 'LIVE' indicator and a play button. The video thumbnail shows a man in a suit, identified as 'The BUZZ with Maria MacCallum'. A caption below the video reads: 'Biden's electric car push clashes with American preferences, says Gingrich'. On the right side of the article, there's a 'FOX NEWS OPINION' logo and a 'Subscribe' button with the text 'Get the recap of top opinion commentary and original content throughout the week. Arrives Daily'.

**From the article: "We'd better start embracing staycations because road trips are out of the question. Forget long drives to see medical specialists. ..." This author must have missed Todd's account in the Sept/Oct 2023 issue of the AUTOIST detailing his 3,000-mile ID.4 road trip.**

# Local Volks

## Activities of VWCA affiliates

### Let's go Pack! ... oh, wait

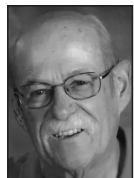
A big part of enjoying our VWs to their fullest involves local clubs and their activities. If there is no local club near you, contact our vice president at [Volkstom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Volkstom@sbcglobal.net). To help you in recruiting new members, brochures are available by emailing [VWClub@aol.com](mailto:VWClub@aol.com).

This column's purpose is to highlight the activities and events of local clubs and give organizers some recognition, and inspiring input for new ideas.

Among the activities of some of our locals: **BADGER AUTOFUN CLUB, MILWAUKEE:** Sure didn't seem like Christmas with no snow in Wisconsin as members attended a Christmas play at the Sunset Playhouse followed by dinner at Mia's in Waukesha. In February, the Leipskis hosted to see if the Packers would win the Super Bowl ... oh, yeah, not this year. Plans and reservations were being made for Memorial Day campouts.

**NORTHEAST ILLINOIS VW ASSN., LISLE:** Besides monthly meetings at Portillos while their Facebook page was "abuzz" about VW's ID. Buzz and video about John's (air-cooled VW) Car Corner in Vermont, a February visit included Chicago's Klairmont Kollection, a car museum. An April swap meet was among many upcoming events planned this year. [nivaclub.org](http://nivaclub.org)

**STATELINE VOLKS FOLKS, ROCKFORD, ILL.:** Besides the monthly brunch or dinner meetings (an unexpectedly large turnout in January) at various locally owned restaurants, an April Fix It Day meet at the Maurers and campout at Giant City State Park were among planned events. Sad note: our condolences on the loss of longtime member Bob Logothetti, who owned a 1967 Beetle.



Logothetti

[statelinevolksfolks.com](http://statelinevolksfolks.com)



Badger members gather for a Christmas celebration.

**CENTRAL FLORIDA VW CLUB, ORLANDO:** While cold weather prevented meetings in January and February, the club's newsletter had an interesting article on the 50-year evolution of the Golf/Rabbit and display of the original (which I remember all too well) at the Bremen Classic Autoshow in Germany. [centralfloridavwclub.org](http://centralfloridavwclub.org)

You can always check [VWClub.org](http://VWClub.org) or [facebook.com/vwclubofamerica](https://facebook.com/vwclubofamerica) for listing of the latest events. **VWCA**

Compiled by Fred Frank | [fwfrank56@gmail.com](mailto:fwfrank56@gmail.com)





# HE COULD HAVE HAD A DISCOUNT

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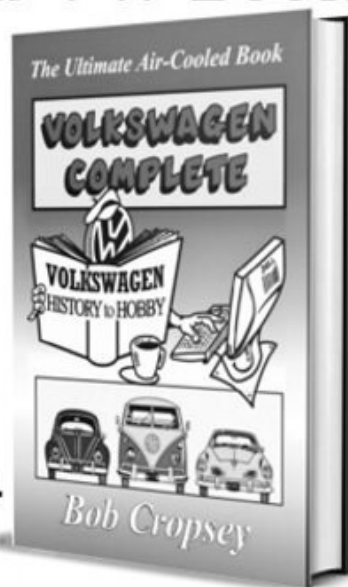
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## DRIVER'S SEAT

► FROM PAGE 3

a Jetta.

Creatively, I respect those who developed this spot because they ditched some Super Bowl ad tropes — especially celebrities as thematic eye candy. Sometimes our fascination with celebrity deflects our attention from the product or service advertised. And the spot wasn't chatty. Its narrative was more music eclectic video than Madison Avenue puffery.

I'd say the big takeaway is VW desperately wants to make its brand resonate with the American car buyer. It wants its slice of the American motor vehicle sales pie. And more specifically, VW wants to engage with its longtime dealers who frankly don't have an automotive hit, although the ID. Buzz, which the ad shifts to at its end, might become a signature



Cliff Leppke, a regular *AUTOIST* contributor since 1993, has upgraded his wheels since getting his first car in the early '60s.

vehicle. The competition is tough; Hyundai/Kia has taken fourth position in USA sales, Subaru has whizzed by VW, Mazda might outsell VW and there's Tesla.

Charlie Hall, the big player at Hall Imports near Milwaukee, is VW's dealer advisory board chairman. He says the commercial is fantastic, "it's what we need as a brand."

He claims a "Super Bowl commercial is something VW dealers want." It is, according to him, a "halo."

So let the brand known for breaking advertising conventions cook up a rather conventional dip into sentimental nostalgia scored by Diamond's "I am... I said." It's a love story, stripped of VW's bad moments

— diesels, anyone?; its logo policing of vintage VW parts? The music bed with lyrics such as a "frog dreamed of being a king" underscores VW's underdog status.

The extended version uses image and sound quite effectively. The '49 Beetle seems to have a charming anthropomorphic twinkle in its eyes. The tagline "We shape Its Metal, You

Shape Its Soul," seems far more truthful than the "Das Auto" campaign from 2008. A car with a soul, with the exception of Kia's eponymous cube, is problematic. Philosopher Immanuel Kant argues material artifacts don't have souls or spirits — those concepts are found in the communities of people who interpret material goods, which the ad depicts.

### A sense of communion

One interesting aspect of this ad is how it addresses us as VW consumers. It sort of underplays VW's wish to shape our thoughts about VW's current crop of cars. It tells us we have the power to transform its motorized sculptures into all sorts of meanings or souls. This reminds me of the mid-'90 pitch "Driver's Wanted." The new ad doesn't have the double play with a help-wanted ad... a playful ad-aware theme other famous VW ads employed. But it does have a sense of communion — presenting the rituals



"American Love Story," VW's Super Bowl ad, is shown at the Chicago Auto Show with the new ID. Buzz in the foreground.

we've created to transform a German-made car into an American phenomenon.

Volkswagen is, in a sense, a people's car. People throughout the world have found ways to make VW's VW their VWs. Unlike Ford's universal car, the Model T, which was foremost an American phenomenon, VW's Beetle developed into an international bestseller, winning fans beyond the former West Germany, a vehicle whose international success derived from a diverse cultural stew far removed from Wolfsburg's stamping ground.

It strikes me as ironic that a mass-produced vehicle, celebrated for its ubiquity, could shed its Nazi-tainted past and become a symbol of gray-flannel suit concerns about postwar conformity, a family's second car or an automotive icon of the 1960s rebellious "youthquake." Clearly the car's soul wasn't the car! It meant different things to divergent social groups.

## An early rejection

VW's 75th anniversary ad campaign kickoff TV spot begins in monochrome, fabricating the arrival of one of the legendary VWs Ben Pon officially brought from Germany to America. This first export, the story goes, was a disaster. Often the dealers Pon approached turned the car away in disgust. Pon spun his wheels in the States, ran up bills, sold the car and its parts for \$800 to pay his hotel bill. He then returned to Wolfsburg with discouraging news. VW chief Heinz Nordhoff in late 1949 also crossed the Atlantic, with photos, seeking to sell the VW


as a means of obtaining the dollars needed to purchase machinery. This trip, too, was an utter failure.

The ad shows the car motoring through NYC, causing bystanders to swivel their heads, not in dismay or disapproval but in seminal curiosity. We see a billboard claiming bigger is better with an inappropriate-for-1949 car with big rear cantilevers and a wrap-around windshield — more 1959 than 1949. We witness a young fashionable couple spy the car. They are drawn to it. They're steel and this little machine is a magnet. The car resides in an unlikely showroom shoulder-to-shoulder with bloated Detroit dishpans.





One wonders: Where did this young couple come from? Who found the woman's foxy hat? And why doesn't the art direction shift to a perspective, say, a shot behind the fascinated pair, making us aware of the spectator's gaze. VW ads often deconstructed these looks, while this ad revels in them.

Fashionable couples were certainly a thing when Arnold Communications was VW's ad agency. Could the love-connection couples in the Super Bowl ad be related to the "Synchronicity" couple in the fourth-gen Jetta ad, the Passat couple in the low "Ego Emissions" ad or the rowdy pair in "Independence Day," otherwise known as the "All Grown Up" ad for the fifth-gen Jetta? We don't know, but young couples in the course of this ad utter nothing but gesture everything.

The ad shifts to color and then shows us brief snippets of people piling into a Beetle, newlyweds >>



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## DRIVER'S SEAT

in a Tiguan, a Disney-movie Beetle launch stunt, a father amusing his son with a Beetle's front lid as a mouth, bits of VW ads, VW's Chattanooga plant and "punch buggy" from Fox's enduring "The Simpsons."

At the ad's end, this spot pivots inelegantly toward the future — the unboxed ID. Buzz. I wished the crate smashed as destructively as the "Unpimp Your Ride" GTI ads by Crispin Porter. As the Buzz E-motors away from us, we see a young couple outside a dis-

play window. Behind that window is a 1949 Beetle. They're not looking at the VW from the past. Instead, the woman is shown wistfully swiveling her head eyeing VW's latest two-toned EV.

I think VW treated us wisely. It didn't exclaim the Buzz was electrified; we already know that. Instead, VW's tagline concludes the ad claiming VW shapes the metal, we shape its soul. As taglines go, this one's better than Leonardo's "Drive Bigger" campaign. Think Small Again. **VWCA**

## ID. BUZZ

### ► FROM PAGE 14

There's a SIGNIFICANT amount of space when row three is folded flat, which is easy to do. The third row is completely removable. VW says the second row isn't, but it looked to me like anyone with a couple simple tools could remove them in short order. There just aren't any quick-release buttons/levers.

The two most common questions I heard: When is it going on sale, and how much? VW hasn't made those announcements. We do know that it's planned for October-December this year. *Motor Trend* noted a rumored \$60k starting price. I'm hopeful they're correct. Others have guessed as high as \$80k.

My personal thoughts: I love everything about it. For 95% of the driving we do, an EV will suit us beautifully, and am looking forward to not caring quite as much about the price of gas. I'll love not standing outside in frigid winter temps pumping gas into it.

My one complaint is same complaint made by nearly everyone who has tested one of VW's current



The foldaway rear hitch may not be included on the US-spec Buzz, but it's a clever option.

products: The lack of buttons and knobs for HVAC, radio power/volume, and maybe heated seats. Putting all of this on the non-tactile touchscreen is a huge mistake. I know VW is working to reverse this major design (and, frankly, safety) issue, but will be curious to see whether they make it in at launch or whether it'll be a subsequent model year change later.

I really wish VW would choose to build our Buzzes in Chattanooga so that

they would qualify for federal tax incentives (and would allow a Chicken Tax-free Buzz cargo van for the US market). Bringing that price down as much as possible would absolutely make the Buzz more of a volume seller here based on all the positive comments I heard.

My fear is the price will turn many away. A vehicle this appealing to so many could easily become a one of VW's highest volume EVs if the price is right. **VWCA**

|| **► GOT A STORY?** Or a quip, a point of view, a problem, a solution? Let us know! Email [VWAutoist@icloud.com](mailto:VWAutoist@icloud.com) ||



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Don't wait any longer to freshen up your summer wardrobe with one of our Club logo T-Shirts!



Select the classic **Bug** in gold and black on an ecru shirt or the red and black **Bus** on a gray shirt. Available in child sizes 6-8 and 10-12, and adult sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL. **Specify size and Bug or Bus when ordering.**  
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**RATES:** Free to VWCA members (including photos). Non-member rate is \$5 for the first 35 words plus 15 cents per additional word. Photos are additional \$5 each. Includes posting on VWClub.org with color photos. Advertisers must provide VWCA ID number or pay in advance. Ads may be edited to meet space limitations. Photos to be returned must be accompanied by a S.A.S.E. of appropriate size. Send to VWCA Classified Ads, P.O. Box 154, North Aurora, IL 60542. Ads requiring no payment can be emailed to VWClub@aol.com.

**FOR SALE:** 1978 Volkswagen Super Beetle Convertible, manual transmission, excellent condition, runs and drives as it should. Originally from Ohio, with 76,000 miles. New interior, new convertible top, new tires. Original paint. Regular oil changes and tuneups. Beautiful little Bug ready to explore open roads. Price: \$22,000, negotiable. Call 716-592-2347 (NY)



**WANTED TO BUY:** 1972-1977 (preferably 74-77) air-cooled VW Beetle with running engine, also from 1972-1977. I am prepared to devote time and \$ to repair floor pans, maybe heater channels, some body work (paint not an issue), and repair/replace such things as: upholstery, carpeting, brakes, shocks, exhaust, fuel system (if engine is fuel injected will likely convert to a carbureted system), and some body work. (HOWEVER, not interested in a rusted-out basket case — already been there and done that in my younger days!) Pete Snyder, cell 708-953-3866, email: kafercar95@gmail.com.

**FOR SALE:** Rebuild air-cooled VW 36 hp, 40 hp, 1600 single port, 1600 dual port, custom 1835, 1915, Porsche 911 2.0, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 3.0, 3.2 and

custom 3108, 3.5, 3.6 liter engines by Wolfsburg and Zuffenhausen trained builder. Call Volker Bruckmann, (760) 765-2149 (CA).

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## New Members

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**FLORIDA:** Frank Sebastiano, Ocala

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**KENTUCKY:** Eldon Petty Jr., Walton

**MASSACHUSETTS:** Peggy Zablontny, Vineyard Haven

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Nathan Forney, Carlisle; Eric Falcione, Pittsburgh;  
John Zych, Waverly

**TEXAS:** Dustin Hopson, Wichita Falls

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### VWCA annual membership meeting

**WHERE:** WindMill Grille & Pizzeria, 90 North Island Ave., Batavia, Illinois (suburban Chicago)

**WHEN:** Noon, Saturday, June 1, 2024

This is the opportunity for all VWCA members to present areas of concern to the national officers. We'll have pizza and a possible visit to a nearby museum. For more information, email vwclub@aol.com.



# OFFICIAL BALLOT

## FOR ELECTION OF VWCA NATIONAL OFFICERS AND TRUSTEE-AT-LARGE



Completed ballot for the 2024 election must be returned to Rick Carlson, VWCA Secretary, 1402 Garden St., Park Ridge, IL 60068-3802 in time to

The Volkswagen Club of America has three nationally-elected Trustees-at-Large to represent the interests of members-at-large - those not served by a Chartered Local Chapter. The term of this office is three years and the terms are rotated so that one Trustee is elected each year.

This ballot also contains the candidates that have placed their names in nomination for the four National Offices as well as a blank space for a write-in.

Our By-Laws allow one vote per membership.

be received no later than June 1, 2024.

Ballots must contain a VWCA Membership Number and be validated by a blind list of current Membership Numbers. Photocopies of this ballot, including those from the on-line Autoist, will be accepted if accompanied by a valid Membership Number.

Ballots are counted and the winner announced at the annual VWCA Membership Meeting. Terms of all offices begin on September 1.

The following Office is for a term of 3 years from Sept. 2024 thru Sept. 2027:

### TRUSTEE AT LARGE

- Fred Ortlip, St. Louis, MO  \_\_\_\_\_

The following Offices are for a term of 2 years from Sept. 2024 thru Sept. 2026:

### PRESIDENT

- \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

### VICE PRESIDENT

- Tom Janiszewski, Woodstock, IL  \_\_\_\_\_

### SECRETARY

- Rick Carlson, Park Ridge, IL  \_\_\_\_\_

### TREASURER

- Gary Hanson, Clarendon Hills, IL  \_\_\_\_\_

The VWCA By-Laws allow one vote per membership. Spaces are provided for write-ins. Mark this ballot and return to Rick Carlson, VWCA Secretary, 1402 Garden St., Park Ridge, IL 60068-3802 in time to be received no later than June 1, 2024. Photocopies of this ballot will be accepted if a valid Membership Number is included. Your Membership Number is found on your Membership Card and on this magazine's mailing label.

**BALLOT MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 1, 2024**

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# Parting Shot

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## FIRST IMAGE LEAK OF VW'S SELF DRIVING CAR



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EXPLOREVWCLUB.ORG

# VW Toon-ups

BY TOM JANISZEWSKI ✉ [volkstom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:volkstom@sbcglobal.net)

