

On
THE CUTTING EDGE

Seats are firm, highly supportive and position the driver precisely for piloting the little pistol with prodigious promptness.

The VW's ergonomics are similarly straight and the GIT's controls operate with a strong, solid sensation that simply screams superiority. Starting at \$21,490, the 2007 Volkswagen GTI has retaken the hot hatch hat from its rivals at Honda and Mini.

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Minivans aren't about looks; these vehicles are the definition of substance over style. With the possible exception of the modern-art Nissan Quest, the important details of a minivan are all in its specification sheet. Kia's second-generation Sedona has nothing to be ashamed of in this department, as the larger, more refined minivan is equipped to match the competition on all fronts.

You can't be a player in the minivan game without dual power sliding doors, heated seats, adjustable pedals, a third-row seat that

folds into the floor and a full complement of airbags, and the Sedona has 'em. The redesigned dash is more useful than before, and the seats are more comfortable. Improved quality brings the Sedona right up to par with the rest of the class. Three-zone climate control, a rear-seat DVD player and power second-row windows make the passenger cabin a comfortable place to be.

Underneath the upholstery and comfortable seating, the Sedona follows the most basic of minivan templates; a V6 engine powering the front wheels, automatic transmission and a freeway-friendly suspension. The 3.8-liter V6 is an all-new engine, with continuously variable valve timing and smooth operation. The Sedona's 244 horsepower easily enables it to keep up with the herd in suburbia, and the new five-speed automatic transmission is state-of-the-art. Freshened styling gives the Sedona



a stronger resemblance to the rest of the Kia family, though from 50 feet away it's still a Generic Minivan.

It's not sexy, but then minivans aren't supposed to be. The new Sedona carries a lot of stuff, drives smoothly and makes a good mobile command center for life in the suburbs. As a minivan, that's exactly what it's supposed to do. With a starting price of \$22,985 and more standard equipment than the Dodge Grand Caravan, Kia's got an attractive deal on its hands.

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Saturn offers a more environmentally friendly Vue model this summer – the Greenline. Officially unveiled to the public at the Detroit International Auto Show, the Vue Greenline is expected to be the lowest-cost hybrid-powered SUV on the market.

The powertrain consists of an electric motor/generator coupled to a 2.4-liter four-cylinder gasoline

engine and a four-speed automatic transmission. The simple and flexible hybrid design provides additional power from the motor/generator during acceleration while allowing 20 percent greater fuel economy by shutting off the engine at idle and cutting off fuel delivery during deceleration.

The Vue Greenline is expected to deliver approximately 27 mpg during city driving and up to 32 mpg during highway operation.

A price increase over its stable mates of \$1,500 to \$2,000 – roughly half that of other SUV hybrids is anticipated. Full vehicle price is projected to start at less than \$23,000. Saturn was able to keep the Greenline hybrid Vue in low budget territory by combining the electric drive motor with the alternator, mounted in front of the engine, eliminating the necessity of a major re-engineering for fitment.

In terms of its appearance, the Vue Greenline Hybrid will be similar to other Vue models, but will display special badging. It will become the third GM hybrid production vehicle, with production slated to start July 1 at Saturn's Springhill, Tenn. plant.

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