

Detroit Auto Scene ROAD REPORT

Buick Regal GS is a 21st Century Gem

BY GERALD SCOTT
NEWS DEPT.



2012 Buick Regal GS.

Behold the 2012 Buick Regal GS, the first and only automobile ever named for an automotive journalist, GS for Gerald Scott.

Actually, I made that up, but I'll take the coincidence.

But by the time my week in the Regal GS test vehicle was done, well, darnit, the car sure felt like it was made for me personally.

As GM has remade itself and its cars, especially over the past decade or so, Buick has done perhaps the most pronounced job of reinventing itself of all of GM's surviving brands.

The neat thing about Buick these days is that they've wisely put the hallmark, mid-20th century Buicks from the 1950s and 1960s into the brand's rear-view mirror.

The 21st century Buick brand lineup, is represented by the Regal GS as one of a whole series of new, stylish, thoughtful, modern and hip Buicks that will likely help the brand to re-emerge in the domestic market.

It's one of the great ironies of the global economy that GM sells more Buicks in China today than it does in the U.S.

Thirty years ago, that would've been heresy. But in today's world, GM has taken a good thing selling overseas and repackaged it here for the home front.

First to mention out of the gate is that the Regal GS comes with a 2.0L, high-output Ecotec 4-cylinder engine, mated to a 6-speed manual transmission, and all those car numbers add up to fun, fun, fun.

Never thought I'd rave about the "get-up-and-go" regarding a Buick with a 4-cylinder engine, but my word, this car just scoots and scoots and scoots.

What's rewarding with the car is that whenever I needed extra juice, the confidence gear while negotiating traffic with 18-wheelers on the expressway, why, the Regal GS was never disappointing.

Now, the car gets 19 mpg city and 27 mpg hwy., but maybe that's to be expected considering that it's still a mid-size car with a curb weight of 3,710 lbs.

The Regal GS boldly announces its arrival with signature front and rear styling – and raises expectations with the aforementioned Ecotec 2.0L high-output turbocharged engine offering more torque than Acura TSX V6 and Audi A4 Sport. Tuned to deliver 270-hp and 295 lb.-ft of torque, Regal GS blurs the lines with an estimated 0-60 mph performance of 6.7 seconds.

This is all notable because

from 1998 to 2008, coincidentally, I drove a 1998 Chevrolet Cavalier, one with a 2.4L engine and while it was a reliable small car, man, the powertrain never kicked out the jams anywhere near what this new-gen 2.0L engine does.

It's amazing what GM, and the entire industry, have done to make engines with smaller displacements that are more reliable, more fuel efficient and more fun than the V8 road beasts of yesteryear.

What's more, the Regal GS comes with a standard, interactive Drive Control System with an exclusive "GS Mode" (a button on the dash), that actually allows drivers to change the suspension settings and steering sensitivity for a more spirited, overall driving performance.

A four-wheel disc brake system with Brembo-built, four-piston front calipers, larger ventilated front discs and high-performance linings keeps one safe in every instance that brakes have to do their job professionally, consistently and confidently on the driver's behalf.

Meanwhile, everything about the interior of the car shouts mid-size luxury, which is the industry category the Regal GS competes in.

Key competitors for the Regal include the Audi A4, Acura TSX, Volvo S60, Lexus IS 250, Volkswagen CC and Infiniti G25. That's quite a lineup to compete against, but the interior of this Buick is a nice combination of classy and elegant materials, impressive fit and finish, and just an overall sense of elegance that screams "prom car" the minute you push the button on the dash to start the engine.

Prom car means that if you have a 17-year-old and you drove the Regal GS, he or she would be begging for a loan out for prom night kind of impressiveness, that is to say.

Actually, that is claiming a lot on behalf of Buick, which of course, thanks to its heritage from the 20th century, screamed "Dad's car" in the old days, and maybe that's not a compliment.

So all you dads out there,



2012 Buick Regal GS interior.

ones with teenage kids, boys and girls alike – spend \$38,350 out the door for our test Regal GS and see if your kids don't become moths to the flame.

The car really is that cool, and further evidence that GM is bringing all of its 21st century surviving brands along for what's shaping up to be a pretty impressive customer ride after all.

That's not to be understated because in the 1990s, GM was roundly criticized for a certain sameness in the style look and feel of its vehicles, even across several brands.

Today it seems fair to claim that 15 or more years later, GM's vehicles have personality and style such that a 4-cylinder Buick that prices out around \$38,000 is going to have wider appeal, especially to buyers under the age of 40.

GM's historic brands including Cadillac and Buick have been fighting their own legacies as "Dad's cars," "not your father's Oldsmobile" and all of that. Suffice to say that the Regal GS is evidence that the entire Buick brand has been reborn into a much sportier image than before.

2012 Buick Regal GS

- Base Price: \$34,450
- As Tested: \$38,350
- Engine: 2.0L Ecotec
- Mileage: 19 cty/27 hwy
- Length: 190.2 inches
- Wheelbase: 107.8 inches
- Trans: 6-speed man.
- Curb wt.: 3,710 lbs.
- Assembly: GM Oshawa

OPTIONS:
Radio / AM-FM stereo with CD and MP3 playback, navigation system with 7-inch color touch screen (\$1,145); power sunroof (\$1,000); and 20-inch polished alloy wheels (\$700).

GM Adds Automatic Transmission to Popular, Sporty 2012 Buick Regal GS

DETROIT – Coming off strong sales year in which it outsold the Audi A4, Lexus IS250, and Acura TSX, Buick's midsize luxury sport sedan continues to evolve.

The performance-oriented Regal GS has a new automatic transmission available in dealerships now. Additionally, with the introduction of the 2013 model later this year, eAssist fuel efficiency technology becomes standard.

U.S. News and World Report has named the Regal the "Best Upscale Midsize Car for Families." Last month, it was named "Best Car for the Money" in the same category. The "Upscale Midsize Car" category includes 19 different vehicles.

The 270 horses of the Regal GS' turbocharged 2.0L Ecotec – one of WardsAuto World's 2012 "10 Best Engines" for North America – can now be controlled through a second transmission. A six-speed automatic with Driver Shift Control is now offered as a no-cost option instead of the existing six-speed manual.

"With the Regal GS, we made a conscious decision to go against the current trend and give enthusiasts the manual transmission they desire as standard equipment" said Tony DiSalle, U.S. vice president of Buick Marketing. "Adding an automatic simply makes the performance of the GS even more accessible."

The new Aisin AF40 automatic is calibrated specifically for Buick's most athletic sedan. With the car's Interactive Drive Control System set to "GS" mode, the transmission delivers firmer shifts, aiding performance. Acceleration matches the manual with an estimated 0-60 mph time of 6.7 seconds.

EPA-estimated fuel economy of 19 mpg city and 27 on the highway, standard performance components like Buick's innovative HiPer Strut front suspension and Brembo front brake calipers, and optional features are identical regardless of the transmis-

sion. Hagerty insurance recently named the Buick Regal GS to its "2012 Hot List" of vehicles its valuation experts expect to be future collectibles.

Starting with the arrival of 2013 models, eAssist will be standard on the Regal with the discontinuation of the 2.4L base model. Both the Regal Turbo and Regal GS models will remain available.

The eAssist uses a compact lithium-ion battery pack and a small electric motor to aid the performance of a fuel-efficient 2.4-liter gas engine. The system provides an electrical boost to aid the engine at low speeds and on inclines where fuel efficiency can suffer most.

The Regal with eAssist achieves an EPA-estimated 36

highway mpg, equal to a Mini Cooper and higher than some full hybrids like the Infiniti M35h, which is rated at 32 mpg.

"Buick is committed to increasing innovation across the lineup," said DiSalle "By making the advanced eAssist powertrain standard on a second vehicle, we are putting the spotlight on smart technology."

For the 2012 model year, eAssist became standard for the larger LaCrosse luxury sedan. Offered at the same price as the V6, eAssist is already outselling its hybrid competitors and is projected to grow in popularity this year. Pricing and an on-sale date for the 2013 Regal with eAssist will be announced later this year.

Ad Experts Say Chevrolet Topped All Auto Brands' Super Bowl Spots

DETROIT – Advertising experts say more people are interested in buying Chevrolet cars and trucks due to clever and targeted advertising and innovative digital campaigns tied to Super Bowl XLVI.

According to the CNBC/Collective Intellect Super Sunday Ad Tracker research conducted before, during and after the game, Chevrolet came in first in purchase language – language that suggests a consumer's intent to purchase a product based on the advertising.

Chevrolet beat out all of the other brands that also advertised during the Super Bowl by a comfortable margin.

"Our strategy was to reach far beyond the in-game spots, and extend the conversation about Chevy cars and trucks through multiple digital efforts before, during and, importantly, after the game," said General Motors Global Chief Marketing Officer Joel Ewanick.

"In the end, brand exposure and purchase consideration is what this is all about, and these results show Chevrolet

nailed it.

"We knew if we delivered a focused message about Chevrolet cars and trucks, using strong creative with a sense of humor, we could generate meaningful interest in our products that could translate into future sales," said Ewanick.

According to Nielsen, Chevrolet ads in total also excelled in breakthrough and memorability, scoring higher than the Automotive Super Bowl average and the Overall Super Bowl average.

In addition to the attention-grabbing ads, Chevrolet's digital efforts proved successful with more than 700,000 registrations for the Chevy Game Time app, more than 35 million page views, and more than 25 million trivia answers submitted before and during the game.

Chevrolet also gained more than 130,000 new fans on Facebook and more than 9,000 new followers on Twitter.

To view all of Chevrolet's Super Bowl ads, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/Chevrolet>.

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