

Old Beetles Really *ARE* Unsafe **A question answered by Car Talk's Click and Clack** **(car expert brothers Tom and Ray)**

Dear Tom and Ray:

My college roommate Kathryn and I are avid fans of your column and radio show, and now I have a question. I've always been interested in purchasing a pre-1998 VW Beetle convertible. Is this just a dumb idea, or do you think I can find a reliable old Beetle that I can love and take care of? I was wondering if you could give me a few pointers on what I should look for in an older Beetle and what to avoid.

Charli

Tom and Ray Answer -

RAY: What should you avoid? Well, the first thing that comes to mind is a pre-1998 Beetle.

TOM: Yeah. I hate to burst your bubble here, but the old Beetle was a dangerous little heap. Even on the day it rolled off the assembly line, it had lousy brakes, lousy handling and barely any crash protection. So an older Beetle is not a car I'd want my college-age daughter driving around in, Charli.

RAY: We should explain to everyone else that in the case of the Beetle, pre-1998=1977 or older. The original Beetle was sold in the United States from 1949 (two were sold that year) until 1977, when the Beetle was phased out-its spot in the lineup having been usurped by the more modern VW Rabbit.

TOM: Then in 1998, in a fit of nostalgia, VW introduced the New Beetle, which looks like the old Beetle but is really a modern VW Golf with a cuter, rounder body. It has front-wheel drive, air bags, disc brakes, reinforced doors, a ventilation system, etc. Basically, it has everything the old Beetle lacked. If you're going to get a Beetle, I'd strongly suggest that you get a New Beetle.

RAY: I know it's not as cool, or as historic, Charli. But you're too young to have your obituary read "Crushed by a Daewoo."

TOM: If you look for a 1998 to 2000 model, you can certainly find one for less than \$10,000. And if you don't have quite that much, isn't that what student loans-and parents-are for?

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