



Kelley Blue Book  
**KBB.COM**  
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# BLUE BOOK BRIEFING

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## In This Issue:

### INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

Timely commentary from Jack R. Nerad, vice president, executive editorial director and executive market analyst, Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com: Good Compared to What?

### LATEST NEWS STORIES ON KBB.COM:

The latest video and written news stories by the editorial staff of Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com

### NEW-VEHICLE REVIEWS ON KBB.COM:

All-new and updated video and written reviews from the editorial staff of Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com, and links to consumer reviews and ratings on KBB.com

### WHAT'S NEW:

KBB.com Names Most-Researched New Vehicles, Brands of 2012; Redesigned Honda CR-V Tops List

KBB.com Video Wins 'Best Audio-Visual' Honor at 2012 Dean Batchelor Awards

### WHAT'S NEW (Continued):

Strong December New-Car Sales to Cap Fantastic Year of Auto Industry Recovery

Big Cash Rebates, Great Deals Available on Remaining 2012 Model-Year Inventory

Familiar Cars With New 2013 Redesigns

KBB.com Announces Top New-Car Deals Available On 2013 Best Resale Value Award Winners

10 Best Car Deals of The Month from KBB.com: Editors Highlight Enticing Offers on New Cars Projected to Best Hold Value

Ford Fusion Named 2013 Best Redesigned Vehicle by Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com

## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

### Good Compared to What?

- Jack R. Nerad, vice president, executive editorial director and executive market analyst, Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com

**B**y many measures 2012 will be classified as a good year for the American auto industry. When 2012 began, few analysts predicted that light-vehicle sales would be more than 13 million units, yet when all the counting is completed it was recorded that 14.5 million units were sold this past year. That is a 13 percent year-over-year increase, and it marks the third year in a row of double-digit sales gains. It will be reported in many quarters that the car industry is back and that an even rosier future lies just around the corner. As I wrote one year ago, in the face of mediocre sales predictions, Americans found a way to do better.

So now that we've finally cleared the runway, we're ready to take off, right? Well, not so fast, Mr. Pilot. Although sales have been on a steady upward trajectory for the past 36 months or so, the forward course might not be as steep a rise as many might hope. Yes, America is a country filled with pent-up demand for new automobiles. The average car on the road is now 11 (11!) years old, which means that simple vehicle replacement will buoy the car market in 2013. And this year as many as 300,000 vehicles are scheduled to be returned by lessees, which presumably will prompt 300,000 sales of new cars. After all, as a dealer I know said, "What are consumers going to do after they turn in their cars? Walk home?" But other forces loom over the American and global economic situation that could upset the apple cart and send the recovery reeling. Interestingly, many of those forces are the same ones the auto industry identified last year, which in itself is not a good sign.

First on the list is the economic situation in Europe, which has worsened considerably over the past 12 months. Europe is now officially in recession, and its sovereign debt-service issues remain unsolved. In fact, a solution to the debt crisis seems as remote now as it did in December 2011, as the European Union and individual European governments continue to do their best to ignore the problem. While we don't feel the full effects of Europe's recession here in North America, it does severely curtail the spending and

potential investment of an important set of trading partners, which means a negative effect on the still-fragile U.S. economy.

And while we decry the European leaders for continuing to kick their can down the road rather than solving the root problem, our political leaders here in America are well on their way to following a similar course. Last year's debt-ceiling debate that led to the 'fiscal cliff' is an example of the same school of policy making. Even more recently, Washington's "solution" to the fiscal cliff situation is little more than a patchwork of quick fixes and political expediency rather than a fundamental change in course that will remedy the systemic issues, and it sets up another fiscal battle that already has been joined. In its wake, consumer confidence is falling; some of the fall prompted by higher taxes and some by the continued high level of unemployment. All in all, it is not a situation that would lead one to believe that 2013 will be a banner year for the auto industry. If the country doesn't get its fiscal house in order, some will be happy if we are able to avoid slipping into a recession. Forget improvement - let's just avoid a backslide.

Which begs the question asked in the title of this piece: "Good compared to what?" In comparison to the years that came immediately before it, 2012 was a very good year. It featured a stronger auto industry recovery than was commonly predicted, and it prompted many Americans to think seriously about buying a new vehicle again. Happily, the vehicle offerings on the market today are as exciting and varied as any time in automotive history, so consumer interest should peak. Further, my sense is that as 2013 unfolds, Americans will continue to desire growth and economic progress. Many will act like things are getting better, even if they really aren't. It might not be the recovery many of us want. It might be a recovery that comes in the face of continued structural issues like the budget deficit and the national debt. But the recovery will continue to stagger forward, and that will have to do until better times come along.

## LATEST NEWS STORIES ON KBB.COM:

Check out the very latest news stories by visiting [KBB.com](http://KBB.com) and clicking the the *KBB.com Top Picks* tab on the home page. The following latest news stories by KBB.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during December 2012.

### **Videos Posted to KBB.com:**

[\*2014 Acura RLX - 2012 Los Angeles Auto Show\*](#)

[\*2014 Chevrolet Spark EV - 2012 Los Angeles Auto Show\*](#)

[\*2014 Mazda Mazda6 - 2012 Los Angeles Auto Show\*](#)

[\*2012 Nissan Quest Video Review\*](#)

[\*2013 Toyota RAV4 - 2012 Los Angeles Auto Show\*](#)

[\*2012 VW Passat TDI Long-Term Review - Part 2\*](#)

### **Written Stories Posted to KBB.com:**

[\*2014 Acura MDX Prototype teased - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*2014 BMW M6 Gran Coupe revealed - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*2014 BMW Z4 Roadster gets mild revamp\*](#)

[\*2014 Cadillac ELR confirmed for Detroit Auto Show\*](#)

[\*2014 Hyundai Equus previewed\*](#)

[\*2014 Mercedes-Benz CLA will introduce new 4MATIC AWD system\*](#)

[\*2013 Best Redesigned Vehicle\*](#)

[\*2013 Buick Encore first drive review\*](#)

[\*2013 Chevy Cruze gets first flexible-venting driver air bag\*](#)

[\*2013 Detroit Auto Show Preview: New Corvette one of many big debuts\*](#)

[\*2013 Dodge Charger AWD Sport unveiled\*](#)

[\*2013 Scion xB receives minor updates\*](#)

[\*2013 Toyota Avalon to be first with in-console Qi wireless charging\*](#)

[\*2013 Toyota RAV4 First Review: The Original Crossover Keeps its Step\*](#)

[\*2013 Volkswagen Jetta Hybrid gives VW seven cars with 40+ mpg\*](#)

[\*10 Things to Know About the 2013 Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG\*](#)

[\*All-new 2014 Lexus IS Series will launch at the Detroit Auto Show\*](#)

[\*BMW Concept 4 Series Coupe revealed - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Chevrolet Volt owners top 100,000,000 electric-only miles driven\*](#)

[\*EPA releases 2013 fuel economy figures\*](#)

[\*Ferrari F150 teased again\*](#)

[\*First Review: 2013 Land Rover LR2\*](#)

[\*First Review: Jaguar's new XF and XJ all-wheel-drive system\*](#)

[\*Ford report outlines consumer trends for the year ahead\*](#)

[\*Honda Urban Vehicle Concept teased for Detroit Auto Show\*](#)

[\*Honda exports its one millionth U.S.-made vehicle\*](#)

[\*Hyundai Connectivity Concept puts smartphone content in your car\*](#)

[\*Infiniti adopts new Q-centric model-naming strategy for 2014\*](#)

[\*Jaguar C-X75 supercar program cancelled\*](#)

[\*KBB.com Editors\*](#)

[\*KBB.com cites sweet December deals on full-size pickup trucks\*](#)

[\*Last Lexus LFA rolls off the line\*](#)

[\*Lincoln Motor Company prepares for a bold new future\*](#)

[\*Mercedes-Benz delivers new Popemobile to Benedict XVI\*](#)

[\*NHTSA study: 2011 highway death toll lowest since 1949\*](#)

[\*Next-gen Chevy Camaro will be made in the USA\*](#)

[\*Revealed: 2013 Chrysler 300 Motown Edition - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Revealed: 2013 Mini Cooper JCW Paceman - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Revealed: 2014 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Revealed: 2014 Ford Transit Van - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Revealed: 2014 Mercedes-Benz E-Class - Detroit 2013\*](#)

[\*Revealed: smart forjeremy Concept - LA 2012\*](#)

[\*Rinspeed microMAX Concept teased for Geneva 2013\*](#)

[\*Saab signs new Warranty Services Agreement with GM\*](#)

[\*Toyota will outline autonomous car plans at 2013 CES\*](#)



## NEW-VEHICLE REVIEWS ON KBB.COM:

The following new-vehicle reviews written by KBB.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during December 2012. To see any new-vehicle review from KBB.com's editorial staff, please visit [KBB.com](http://KBB.com) and click on the *Car Reviews* tab, then select the make and model.

### [2013 Acura ILX](#)

The 2013 Acura ILX sedan has set its sights on tapping into a 4-door luxury-leaning market that sits just below, in price and size, the BMW 3 Series and Audi A4 audience. Acura has its entry-level-luxury bets covered with three models – sedate, sporty and hybrid – each with its own style...

### [2013 BMW X1](#)

The 2013 BMW X1 is almost ready to make its American debut. The 5-passenger SUV will slot in under the X3 when it goes on sale in this fall. The BMW X1 has been a popular SUV in global markets, and furthers the trend of downsizing premium vehicles...

### [2013 Buick Encore](#)

A well-mannered, well-finished compact crossover SUV that goes on sale in February, the 2013 Buick Encore expands the division's reach into an entirely new market segment. Intended to capture the hearts and minds of both younger urban buyers as well as empty nesters that want a versatile vehicle but no longer need an Enclave-scaled SUV with seating for seven, the 5-passenger Encore matches premium character with an accommodating interior and attractive pricing...

### [2013 Chevrolet Malibu](#)

For 2013, Chevrolet has remade its popular Malibu and Malibu Eco sedans, infusing them with more distinctive styling both inside and out. Complementing the new styling are improved technologies, such as the MyLink infotainment system that allows voice control of the phone, radio, navigation and iPod interface...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Honda Crosstour](#)

A scaled-down alternative to traditional SUVs, the 2013 Honda Crosstour is a conundrum wrapped in an enigma wrapped in sheet metal. Think of it as the Swiss Army Knife of automobiles – equal parts sedan, wagon and SUV. But like a Swiss Army Knife, the Honda Crosstour's all-in-one design inherently limits the full potential of its various functions...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Mazda CX-9](#)

The 2013 Mazda CX-9 bucks that old adage about not having your cake and eating it, too. In the case of Mazda's biggest vehicle, the CX-9 offers the roominess of a large SUV, yet boasts the driving dynamics of a smaller sport sedan. This 3-row, 7-passenger vehicle also bucks the status quo with its exterior styling. Instead...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 McLaren MP4-12C](#)

After decades of proving its mettle on racetracks, McLaren recently began taking on cars such as Ferraris and Lamborghinis in another, equally competitive setting: the showroom. Introduced in 2012, the MP4-12C establishes McLaren as a legitimate player in the elite world of track-ready supercars...

### [2013 Mercedes-Benz SL](#)

With appearances in over 150 movies and a reputation synonymous with celebrity glamour, the Mercedes-Benz SL is as much an international pop-culture icon as it is a classic roadster. All-new from the tires up, the 2013 SL-Class is underpinned by a highly rigid yet lightweight aluminum bodyshell that weighs some 300 pounds less than its steel predecessor...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Mini Countryman](#)

Think of the 2013 Mini Cooper Countryman as the “big Mini.” Though still small by regular-car standards, the Countryman is the roomiest, most passenger-friendly vehicle in the expanding Mini lineup. With four real doors, seating for five and a rear cargo hatch, the Mini Cooper Countryman breathes more everyday practicality into the British marque and BMW sub-brand...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 smart fortwo](#)

When the Smart Fortwo debuted in 2008, America's smallest car garnered an instant following as buyers flocked to this 2-seater for its low price, good fuel economy, and the sheer Euro-chic factor it brought to our shores. The years since have not been so kind to Smart, a subsidiary of Mercedes-Benz. Since its launch, the Smart Fortwo has been met with mediocre reviews and dwindling sales...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Subaru BRZ](#)

The 2013 Subaru BRZ is a compact rear-wheel-drive sports car that exists solely to engage its driver and deliver high-performance thrills on the streets and at the racetrack. That's the kind of simple mission statement we can get behind. Tight steering, a well-sorted suspension and firm, capable brakes help the BRZ deliver ample dynamic fun, while a comparatively modest price tag makes that fun accessible to passionate drivers of common means. The BRZ competes in the same rear-drive ring as the Chevrolet Camaro, Ford Mustang and Hyundai Genesis Coupe, but proves itself to be a formidable opponent with its lightweight body and high-strung attitude...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Suzuki Grand Vitara](#)

The 2013 Suzuki Grand Vitara can get lost in the compact SUV segment. Competitors such as the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4 sell in droves, while Suzuki's lone SUV is often missed. Though given a mild facelift this year, the GV still relies on a rather dated powertrain and can struggle to compete in this hot segment of the market...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Toyota Camry](#)

Whether it was years of criticism regarding the Camry's lackluster styling, or a gentle wakeup call from Korean competitors like the Hyundai Sonata and Kia Optima, Toyota finally took the plunge last year and gave its hot-selling family sedan the red-carpet treatment. With a stronger appeal to younger buyers, Toyota hopes to keep the 2013 Camry's impressive sales figures running high, and with models ranging from the base L to the sporty SE, to the fuel-efficient Hybrid or the luxurious XLE, it seems there is no shortage of variations to appeal to just about every taste...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

### [2013 Toyota RAV4](#)

The RAV4 is the crossover SUV that takes credit for starting the segment back in 1995. Nearly two decades later, crossover SUVs have exploded in popularity because of their versatility, fuel economy and car-like handling. 2013 marks the fourth generation for the revamped RAV4. With it, Toyota's smallest SUV receives a much-needed styling update, new technology and more miles per gallon of gasoline...

### [2013 Volkswagen CC](#)

Based on VW's award-winning Passat, the 2013 Volkswagen CC, which stands for “Comfort Coupe,” ditches the unique front and rear styling of its predecessor for a new look that conforms to the brand's current design language. While its “4-door coupe” designation is, in fact, an oxymoron, the Volkswagen CC offers the sweeping roofline, frameless side glass and low, aggressive stance of a coupe with the practicality of four doors...

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

## KBB.com Names Most-Researched New Vehicles, Brands of 2012; Redesigned Honda CR-V Tops List

**Asian Automakers, Models Dominate Most-Researched List Year-Over-Year; Honda Leapfrogs Ford in Market Share**

IRVINE, Calif., Jan. 3, 2013 - The redesigned [Honda CR-V](#) is No. 1 on the list of the most-researched new vehicles of 2012 on [www.kbb.com](#) announces Kelley Blue Book, the leading provider of new and used car information. In addition, Kelley Blue Book reveals the top 20 most-researched new vehicles and the top five brands with the greatest share of market interest on its website for 2012.

This year's success story is the [Mazda3](#), entering the top 20 most-researched new vehicles of 2012 at No. 10, making significant climbs from its spot at No. 29 in 2011. The Mazda3's victory can be attributed to the vehicle's fuel efficiency and affordability, sparking interest among car shoppers.... [MORE](#)

## KBB.com Video Wins 'Best Audio-Visual' Honor at 2012 Dean Batchelor Awards

**Motor Press Guild Praises Kelley Blue Book Editorial's 'KBB Races a Mazda Miata - Part 1: Skip Barber Race School' for Outstanding Automotive Journalism in its Category**

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 28, 2012 - The '[KBB Races a Mazda Miata - Part 1: Skip Barber Race School](#)' video recently was honored with the 'Best Audio-Visual' award during the 2012 Dean Batchelor Awards from the Los Angeles-based Motor Press Guild (MPG), announces Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the leading provider of new and used car information. The Motor Press Guild is the largest automotive media association in North America.

The award-winning video, first published on both KBB.com and YouTube in February 2012, highlights the experience of racing a [Mazda Miata](#) at the famous Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. With training from the Skip Barber Mazda MX-5 Race School, Micah Muzio, managing editor of video for Kelley Blue Book, learned what it takes to win behind the wheel of Mazda's popular roadster ... [MORE](#)

## Strong December New-Car Sales to Cap Fantastic Year of Auto Industry Recovery

**Kelley Blue Book Expects 1.35 Million Units Sold in December; Honda to Continue Sales Gains**

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 27, 2012 - With annual year-end clearance events in full swing, [new-car](#) sales are expected to surpass 1.35 million units in December, pushing the industry's closely followed seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) to 15.2 million units, according to Kelley Blue Book, [www.kbb.com](#), the leading provider of new and [used car](#) information.

"At 15.2 million SAAR, new-car sales will come in below the 15.5 million units pace set in November, when replacement demand from buyers in the Northeast region drove sales beyond seasonal expectations," said Alec Gutierrez, senior market analyst of automotive insights for Kelley Blue Book... [MORE](#)

## Big Cash Rebates, Great Deals Available on Remaining 2012 Model-Year Inventory

**KBB.com Identifies Vehicles with Sizeable Discounts, Based on Kelley Blue Book® Fair Purchase Price**

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 21, 2012 - Consumers typically can find the best deals of the year in December, and this year should be no different, according to Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the leading provider of new and used car information. While replacement vehicle demand in the Northeast following Superstorm Sandy should help drive sales in December, the bulk of sales will come from buyers who are waiting to take advantage of year-end clearance events... [MORE](#)

## Familiar Cars With New 2013 Redesigns

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 21, 2012 - Every New Year brings dozens of brand-new vehicles, and many of them are next-generation versions of cars that shoppers already know and love. New-car shoppers can check out details about the latest cars that have been redesigned for the New Year in '[Familiar Cars with New Looks for 2013](#)' from the editors of Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com... [MORE](#)

## KBB.com Announces Top New-Car Deals Available on 2013 Best Resale Value Award Winners

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 18, 2012 - On the heels of its 2013 Best Resale Value Awards, recognizing current and forthcoming vehicles for their projected retained value throughout the initial five-year ownership period, Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com, the leading provider of new and used car information, is featuring the [10 best deals](#) currently available on new cars that recently won 2013 Best Resale Value Awards... [MORE](#)

## 10 Best Car Deals of the Month From KBB.com: Editors Highlight Enticing Offers on New Cars Projected to Best Hold Value

**Editors Hand-Select Deals on New Cars that Recently Won 2013 Kelley Blue Book Best Resale Value Awards**

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 14, 2012 - Because considering [resale value](#) down the road is an important part of getting a good deal when buying a new car today, KBB.com is featuring the 10 best deals currently available on new cars that recently won 2013 Best Resale Value Awards from Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the leading provider of new and used car information. For the latest [10 Best Car Deals of the Month](#) list, KBB.com's expert editors and analysts hand-selected a group of enticing offers currently available on 2013 Kelley Blue Book Best Resale Value Award winners... [MORE](#)

## Ford Fusion Named 2013 Best Redesigned Vehicle by Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com

**KBB.com Editors Detail More than 20 Vehicles Redesigned for 2013 and Name Ford Fusion Best**

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 13, 2012 - The Ford Fusion has been named [2013 Best Redesigned Vehicle](#) by Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the leading provider of new and used car information. The expert editors of Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com considered more than 20 vehicles that were redesigned for the 2013 model year, but none could hold a candle to the completely renewed version of the popular mid-size model... [MORE](#)

### About Kelley Blue Book ([www.kbb.com](#))

Founded in 1926, Kelley Blue Book, The Trusted Resource®, is the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the industry. Each week the company provides the most market-reflective values in the industry on its top-rated website [www.kbb.com](#), including its famous Blue Book® Trade-In and Suggested Retail Values and Fair Purchase Price, which reports what others are paying for new cars this week. The company also provides vehicle pricing and values through various products and services available to car dealers, auto manufacturers, finance and insurance companies as well as governmental agencies. KBB.com provides consumer pricing and information on cars for sale, minivans, pickup trucks, sedan, hybrids, electric cars, and SUVs. Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com ranked highest in its category for brand equity and was named Online Auto Shopping Brand of the Year by the 2012 Harris Poll EquiTrend® study. Kelley Blue Book Co. Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of AutoTrader Group.