

# BIO-BEETLES

## *In Paradise*



*Veggie Oil VW Rentals  
in the Hawaiian Islands*

*By Ron Cogan*

**A**m I nuts? Just 15 minutes earlier, I was on Waikiki Beach under an umbrella, shaved ice in one hand and a book in the other. So why am I now motoring along Ala Moana Boulevard, well outside the 22 acres of blissful Hilton Hawaiian Village paradise I'd been calling home for the past few days?

Because there was a Beetle running about the island on vegetable oil, that's

why. People were talking about it. It was cute. It was eco-friendly. It was even green...and if that's not a sign, I don't know what is.

Another 10 minutes past the Aloha Tower and I was pulling into the parking lot at Tradewinds U-Drive, a few blocks off the main drag. There, company vice-president Dana Newberry pointed to the highly-evolved Beetle, handed over a set of keys, and was done

with me. There wasn't anything more to say because there were no special things to know about this VW and its mechanicals. It was factory-stock with absolutely nothing changed, modified, upfitted, or generally fooled-around with. It just happened to seamlessly run on recycled vegetable oil instead of regular diesel fuel.

Okay, I'm game. I fired it up and headed back out onto Ala Moana, waiting for

cues that told me there were drawbacks to driving a Bio-Beetle in paradise. They didn't come. There was no lack of power, no hesitation, no discernible trade-offs to indicate I was trading motoring integrity for environmental integrity. I *liked* that.

An instant lesson: The toughest part of driving this vehicle is keeping a low profile, which, by the way, isn't really possible. That's because the aforementioned green car also sports side graphics proudly proclaiming, "Powered by 100% Recycled Vegetable Oil." When stopped, the questions come...trust me. You could look surly, blast out all the wrong music, and be pierced and tattooed over 80 percent of your body...and still get those warm and fuzzy looks for your proclivity to save the environment.

This is likely one of the unintended, and positive, consequences of creating something this new and exciting. The brainchild of Shaun Stenshol, president of Bio-Beetle Rentals on Maui, the Bio-Beetle reflects his belief that people would be thrilled with the option to rent cars running on fuel made from used cooking oil. Once they see that the Bio-Beetle runs just like a regular car, Shaun feels there's the potential they may be prompted to get one of their own. Shaun's aim is to bring his Bio-Beetles to a broader audience by expanding franchises to Los Angeles and San Francisco within

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the next few years, along with other west coast cities where the Bio-Beetle would be at home.

Fueling up with B100 biodiesel is done on Oahu for about \$2.50/gallon at the Tradewinds facility or at the Pacific Biodiesel Sand Island plant just a few miles away. On Maui, drivers fuel up for about \$2.32/gallon at the Pacific Biodiesel office in Kahului, about a half-mile down the road from the company's rental agent, Maui Car Rentals. Biodiesel available at these facilities begins its journey at restaurants around Hawaii, where pumping companies collect the used vegetable oil and transport it to the Pacific

Biodiesel facilities. Here, it goes through a process called transesterification to remove glycerine, creating biodiesel (methyl esters).

Toward the end of the test drive, the photo shoot was not done in isolation. There were onlookers, questioners, and generally those who thought I must be something pretty special because I was driving the green machine. And I was, really, because I was smart enough to find it, turn the engine over, and do something right by the environment by simply driving in paradise. If you're going to Oahu or Maui, for about \$199 per week plus fuel, you can too.

