

The changes may not be big, but the quality continues

A five-speed for the Scirocco; diesel for the Dasher; the Beetle lives!

VOLKSWAGEN

The Volkswagen lineup for 1979 is distinguished by the presence of the three leading economical cars in the U.S.—the Rabbit diesel with either a four-speed manual transmission or a new optional, five-speed and the new Dasher diesel. A four-door Dasher hatchback replaces the Dasher sedan with a conventional trunk, and the Scirocco coupe is now available with five-speed transmission and a larger, more powerful engine. Plus, the first American-made Rabbits are now available. Continuing virtually unchanged is the popular Beetle Con-

vertible either with 42 mpg highway and 26 city.

At present, only gas Rabbits are being produced at the plant in Westmoreland, Pennsylvania. North American content in these cars is now 40 percent. VW officials estimate that within 14 months almost 75 percent of the cars will be domestically manufactured, the engine and drivetrain still coming from Germany. The Rabbit diesel will remain an import for at least another six months. But optimism is running so high concerning sales, in fact, that VW feels it may recover its investment in America by 1981! This is remarkable and only serves to underline Volkswagen's continuing popularity in the American market.

Major technical specifications remain unchanged, but the availability of VW's passive restraint system will be widened during the year. As yet it has only been a part of the top-of-the-line Rabbit L, but this year it will be an

option on the Rabbit C. The basic Rabbit has been upgraded considerably, including wider tires, cut pile carpeting, fully padded headliner, self-adjusting brakes and a new three-point safety belt design.

In addition to the basic Rabbit, two other models are available: the Rabbit C with many custom features and the Rabbit L with deluxe interior and styling touches. The C and L models are available with two or four doors. Standard on all Rabbits is front-wheel drive, rack-and-pinion steering, front disc brakes and independent front and rear suspension.

New standard equipment on the C includes AM radio, a choice of four instrument panel colors and the addition of power brakes for manual transmission models.

Changes in the L model include rubber-faced bumper guards, a bright radiator grille, AM/FM radio, tinted glass, full wheel covers, a trip odo-

1979 VW, AUDI and PORSCHE LINEUP

vertible—one of the last open four-seaters on the market—the Bus, Kombi and Campmobile.

Predicted sales figures in the U.S. for 1979 are 210,000 Rabbits (60,000 of which are to be diesels), 27,000 Sciroccos, 24,000 Dashers and 17,000 Convertibles. VW officials hope to garner a 30- to 40-percent share of the passenger car diesel market with the Rabbit and Dasher diesels.

Rabbit

The 1979 Rabbit is available with a choice of two different engines, three transmissions and a wider variety of colors and interiors than ever before. The Rabbit diesel equipped with five-speed transmission won EPA honors for best fuel economy, rated at 55 mpg highway and 41 city. The gas-powered Rabbit is by no means a



Top-of-the-line Rabbit L available with two or four doors.

Clean lines and comfort characterize Rabbit L interior.



A Volkswagen welcome to Vermont . . .

It was that time of the year again, time for the automotive press to preview the new model line from Volkswagen. During the past few years, the annual trek to New England has become something of a tradition. Most of the leading auto writers in the nation join a handful of German journalists to commune with some of the top brass of Volkswagen of America (VWoA) for the

purpose of examining the VW line for the coming year. Hidden away in the hinterlands of New England for a couple of days, the assemblage enjoys a rare opportunity to (1) exchange ideas and share knowledge on the various Volkswagen models; (2) drive and photograph the vehicles in one of Nature's most beautiful settings; (3) see old friends and make new

ones; and (4) gain at least five pounds at the ever-present buffet tables.

In keeping with the German tradition of unparalleled hospitality, the management of VWoA are the most gracious hosts in the automobile industry. The 1979 Volkswagen preview began at the venerable old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in the heart of New York City. The hosts and their guests assembled at the Waldorf on Tuesday evening, October 17.

To best appreciate driving a '79 Volkswagen—any '79 Volkswagen—on the winding, uncluttered roads of New England, one must first struggle from the airport to mid-Manhattan through the nightmare of New York City's traffic. To best appreciate the rustic beauty of Vermont in autumn, one must first spend a

meter and a redesigned adjustable side view mirror.

Six optional packages for the C and L are available so the buyer can tailor the car to personal preferences and needs. Options include air conditioning, a sliding steel sunroof, rear window wiper and washer, light alloy wheels and cruise control.

Available from more than 1000 dealers, the Rabbit, like all VWs, is covered by a 12-month, 20,000-mile limited warranty.

Dasher

The new Dasher is highlighted by a four-door model and the availability of a diesel engine option. A hatchback replaces the standard conventional trunk, creating cargo space that rivals some station wagons. When equipped with the diesel option, the Dasher delivers 46 mpg highway and 36 city. A single fillup will theoretically power the Dash for over 500 miles.

New interior and exterior colors are available, including metallics as standard. Other standard features are self-adjusting power brakes, an AM/FM stereo radio, front-wheel drive, steel-belted radials, rack-and-pinion steering, flow-through ventilation, a quartz clock and an electric rear window defogger.

A space-efficient vehicle, the Dasher two-door has 46.6 cubic feet

of cargo space, the four-door also has 46.6 cubic feet, while the wagon has 51.6 cubic feet with its rear seat folded. In addition, the four-door versions have "child-proof" rear door locks.

Beetle Convertible

Since it was introduced in 1949, the Convertible has retained a place in the hearts of car buyers, to the extent that it is one of the few remaining four-passenger convertibles on the market. For 1979, those features that were special on the 1978 Champagne Edition are now standard.

The Convertible features wider 165-15 steel-belted radial whitewall tires, sport rims, a leatherette-covered steering wheel, a clock, wood-grained dashboard trim and a cigarette lighter—a standard item for the first time. Also featured are windshield wipers with an intermittent mode.

Available colors include River Blue Metallic, Lemon Yellow and Diamond Silver Metallic—all with black tops. Other colors include Florida Blue, Alpine White and Mars Red—all with light sand-colored tops. Additional standard equipment includes an electrically heated glass rear window and adjustable headrests.

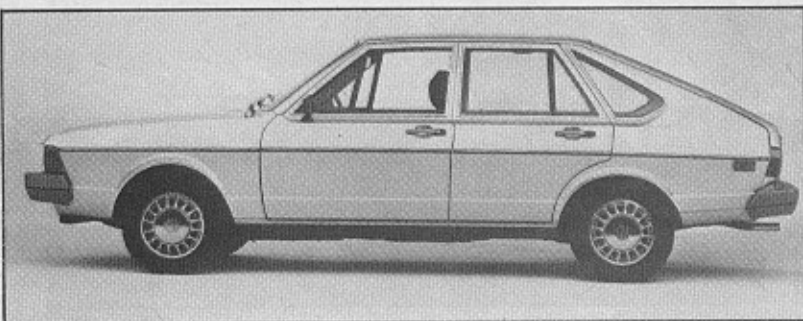
The Beetle Convertible will apparently be replaced after the '79 model year by a new Rabbit Convertible.

Scirocco

Heading the list of improvements in the 1979 Scirocco is a larger, more powerful engine. The displacement has increased its 1977 dimensions of 1457cc to 1588cc, and horsepower now stands at 78 hp (compared to 71 hp last year). According to Dr. Frierich Goes, vice president of engineering at Volkswagen of America, the reason VW reduced the size of the engine in the '78 Scirocco was because it was felt noise and vibration were too excessive. Since then, however, engineers have been able to better isolate mechanical clatter and vibration from the passenger compartment, thus permitting them to return to the more potent powerplant. Like the Dasher, the Scirocco now has power-assisted front disc and rear drum brakes with diagonal dual circuits, and the safety belt system has been redesigned for more comfort. Also new this year is the availability of an optional sunroof that can be removed or tilted open.

Bus

One of the most economical van-type vehicles around, the new Bus is estimated to get 17 mpg in the city and 23 mpg on the highway. Available as a seven- or nine-passenger Bus, Campmobile or Kombi, the new



Diesel engine option and new hatchback design highlight Dasher.



Scirocco receives larger engine; sunroof is optional.

night in the treeless concrete jungle that is midtown New York. And to best appreciate the relaxed, unhurried atmosphere of the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont, one must first suffer through the registration process at the Waldorf-Astoria, a famous old hotel where the splendor has tarnished but the reputation remains. The schedule for a VW preview is a carefully calculated plan that prepares everyone to appreciate what is to come.

The evening at the Waldorf passed after endless handshakes, reunions and introductions. Early the next morning, breakfast was served in an elegant, private dining room. We then boarded chartered buses and were whisked away to LaGuardia Airport's Marine Terminal for an Air New England flight to Burlington, Ver-

mont. Moving more than 100 groggy guests and their luggage from New York to New England early in the morning is only slightly less difficult than establishing a Volkswagen factory in Westmoreland, Pennsylvania. But the VWoA public relations department pulled it off without the loss of either guest or suitcase.

At the Burlington Airport, we were greeted by a long line of smiling VW representatives and an even longer line of highly-polished '79 VW products—Rabbits, Dashers, Sciroccos, and a VW bus. There were diesels, hatchbacks, and manuals, two-doors and four-doors, in a variety of colors and trim packages. We were instructed to pair off, choose a vehicle, and follow the rally instructions found in each car. VW p.r. man Herb Williamson

has become an expert in conceiving diabolical rallies from airports to hotels throughout New England. The instructions called for the answers to several questions, the clues to which were encountered en route. Prizes would be awarded to the winners.

VW & Porsche editor Jay Amestoy and I spent the better part of the day motoring through Vermont in a high-performance Scirocco and a high-economy diesel Dasher, changing vehicles with another pair of journalists at a designated checkpoint.

Vermont is beautiful in the fall, but the season had dealt us an unkind blow, for most of the leaves had changed to golds and reds and had already fallen by the time we arrived. Nevertheless, even with bare

models retain the same features as the 1978 editions, except for the addition of an exhaust catalyst for 49-state cars, an exhaust sensor for California cars and some new exterior colors.

The only van available in the U.S. with four-wheel independent suspension, the Bus continues to be powered by the two-liter, fuel-injected four of proven reliability. Standard features include power front disc brakes, reinforced radial tires, a three-point front safety belt system, a blower-booster heater and flow-through ventilation system, an electrically heated rear window defogger and four-speed synchronized transmission. An automatic transmission is optional, as are a large sliding steel sunroof and air conditioning.

The Campmobile features an LP gas stove, an electric refrigerator that works off the alternator, 120 v power or its own battery and city water hookup as part of the deluxe package. The deluxe version also has two full-size double beds, one in the easy-to-use pop-up top.

And because the Bus has a wheelbase of only 94.5 inches—about the same as the Rabbit—it fits neatly into parking spaces some drivers shake their fists at.

Special VWs

The VW Jack Rabbit is a design study car for future possible production. Based on the Rabbit, of course, it features an extended front spoiler lip, wheelwell flares and wider tires for better aerodynamics and handling. The grille is blacked out, as is all the trim. Special side striping and all-black interior highlights the package.

In this age of "shortage" awareness, it is not at all illogical to see the Rabbit utilized more for public services. Its superb gas mileage, dependability and excellent handling make it a perfect choice for urban traf-ficking. (And the police no longer need big billboards to hide behind with their radar.) The large cargo space allows even taxi drivers to save on operational costs.

AUDI FOX

The Audi Fox will be available in four models for 1979: the standard two-door sedan, a four-door sedan, four-door wagon and limited-edition GTi. As previewed in our December issue, Audi has upgraded the '80 model in Europe (called the Fox here)

to near 5000 levels with a new shape, new larger dimensions and a stateside higher standard of handling. However, it won't be available for at least six months.

All Fox models are powered by a 1.6-liter overhead cam four capable of 78 horsepower.

Standard features include front-wheel drive; a four-speed manual transmission; independent MacPherson strut front suspension with negative roll radius, stabilizer bar and coil springs; power-assisted dual diagonal circuit front disc brakes; rack-and-pinion steering and steel-belted radials.

The GTi package is identified by the side striping and silver metallic finish. The all-black interior is highlighted by Recaro-type front bucket seats covered in corduroy and an aluminum-spoked steering wheel. Sport wheel covers and performance gauges complete the GTi look. It will be available also in four-door and wagon models.

5000

The 5000 features the first inline gasoline-powered five-cylinder engine ever used in a passenger car. Like the Audi/VW fours, the five has a cast-iron block and utilizes a single, belt-driven overhead camshaft inside an



Rabbits are springing up everywhere for every use.

VOLKSWAGEN WELCOME TO VERMONT *continued*

branches, Vermont is a beautiful place to enjoy a good automobile.

At midday, we regrouped at the historically famous Woodstock Inn for lunch. Late that afternoon, we arrived at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, our headquarters for the remainder of the preview.

To illustrate the versatility of the VW line, the front lawn of the inn served as a parking lot for a Rabbit taxi from Plattsburgh, New York; a Rabbit police car from Greensboro, North Carolina; the diesel

Rabbit fuel economy champ; a selection of VW racing machines; and one or two specially trimmed production models. It was an impressive assortment indeed.

The schedule for the remainder of Wednesday, October 18, read this way: "6:00 p.m. Cocktails; 7:00 p.m. Dinner; 9:00 p.m. Entertainment." The cocktail hour was filled with less-than-exciting stories of misadventures that occurred between Burlington Airport and the inn. Dinner was a culinary experience. Entitled "Nine Nation Nosh," it included small portions of favorite dishes from Mexico, Indonesia, South Africa, the United States, Belgium, Nigeria, Yugoslavia, West Germany and Brazil—the nine nations in which Volkswagen presently has some kind of

manufacturing or assembly facility. Can you imagine the kitchen at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont when VWoA ordered this dinner menu? If it didn't delight every palate in the room, it certainly made for interesting conversation. Following dinner, musical entertainment was provided by The Great Swamp Jazz Band. There are no television sets at the Lake Morey Inn and long distance telephoning was difficult at best because of the large number of journalists attempting to call all at once. The Great Swamp Jazz Band was the big hit of the night.

After breakfast the next morning, VW's director of public relations Baron Bates hosted an enlightening, two-hour press conference. Present to answer questions

aluminum cylinder head. It is also fitted with a Bosch K-Jetronic CIS injection system.

The list of standard equipment is as comprehensive as found on even the most expensive German sedans. Front and rear headrests are standard, cruise control is standard—even with the four-speed—velour type fabric on the seats is standard, as is a carpeted trunk, rear center armrest, power steering, intermittent wiper control, padded wheel, dash-mounted stereo speaker grilles, electric clock and woodgrain dash. Options include automatic transmission, AM/FM stereo radio, air conditioning, metallic paint, 6x14-inch light alloy wheels, electric sunroof, power windows, central door locks, manually operated vent windows, heated front seats and power antenna.

The five-cylinder engine is more like a six than a four. Gas mileage is 25 mpg highway and 18 mpg city. But the five-cylinder is quiet and vibration-free and will pull strongly and effortlessly. Ride is excellent with a new beefed-up suspension system.

The 5000S model, a sporty new model Audi for 1979, features a five-speed transmission and a larger 19.8-gallon fuel tank. With an EPA

rating of 26 mpg on the highway, the 5000S has over a 500-mile cruising range. Standard equipment includes air conditioning, AM/FM stereo radio, power windows and door locks, light alloy wheels and vent windows. Like all 5000 models, standard items are tinted windshield, trunk light, right-hand mirror and self-adjusting brakes. The cost of a 5000S POE East Coast is \$10,575 for the five-speed model. The base 5000 four-door manual transmission is \$8995 POE East Coast.

PORSCHE 924

The 924 is basically unchanged for its fourth model year. However, the standard gearbox is now a manual five-speed, while the three-speed automatic becomes an option. Also standard on the new model are 6Jx14 pressure cast, light alloy wheels mounting 185/70 HR 14 steel-belted radials, plus a space-saver spare. A notable option is an electrically operated outside mirror.

The powerplant remains the two-liter, four-cylinder developing 115 horsepower. Further detail changes in-

clude new colors and cloth for door panels.

911 SC

The 911 SC has been so successful in terms of reliability and performance that Porsche felt no need to change it for its 15th model year. It again is powered by the three-liter, six-cylinder boxer producing 180 horsepower. New color options are available.

928

Also unchanged for 1979 is the 928. The front-mounted 4.5-liter V-8 drives the large, luxury sport car to a top speed of 142 mph. Advanced engineering guarantees optimum driving stability and a maximum of road safety and comfort.

930 Turbo

The changes made by Porsche for the '78 930 were apparently for the best. The engine remains 3.3 liters, producing 265 horsepower. Clearly one of the most distinctive cars on the road, the 930 Turbo satisfies not only performance levels but energy-saving and environmental goals.



Audi Fox gets more size and heft, rising half a class.



Jack Rabbit is only a design study, possibly a car for the future.

from the press were Jim McLernon, president of VWoA; Noel Phillips, executive vice president in charge of sales and marketing; Richard Mugg, vice president-Volkswagen Division; and several company department heads and specialists. It is notable that the VW executives in attendance answered each and every relevant question in detail and, more importantly, did not lose their decorum when faced with far too many irrelevant questions. It was a good press conference.

Charter buses left at 2:00 p.m. for Lebanon Airport and the return flights to New York.

Much of what the world will read in the press about the '79 Volkswagens will come from the preview in Vermont. Those

of us who were there learned that VW's Westmoreland, Pennsylvania factory is running smoothly in spite of a recent labor dispute and that the Rabbits being assembled there are meeting VW's high standards of quality. VW is looking for increased sales in the Rabbit, Scirocco and Dasher lines. According to company spokesmen, 1979 promises to be an excellent year for VW. The diesel engine has done everything it was expected to do and has proven to be a valuable addition to the VW engine line-up. VWoA is the fifth largest car builder in the U.S. at the moment and looks forward to increasing its share of the market. VW intends to continue building the Beetle convertible as long as there is a market for it. Above all,

the preview in Vermont left us with the impression that the '79 VW line will be warmly received by the buying public.

As for the preview itself, it was a pleasant adventure, a chance to rub shoulders with the VW brass and learn a little from some of the best automotive men in the world. I'm sorry the leaves had already fallen in Vermont. I'm glad that our stay at the Waldorf-Astoria did not extend beyond one night. I'm pleased that VW has not expanded its manufacturing facilities beyond nine nations, for a "Ten Nation Nosh" would be more than my stomach could bear. And I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to drive the '79 Volkswagens anytime, anywhere.—*Marshall Spiegel.*