



Traditionally Volkswagen of America does not hold its press conference to announce the new models until mid-October each year. That means that daily and weekly newspapers are able to feature the new cars well before a magazine such as ours can, due to the time required to produce a monthly.

Last year there were hardly any new VWs for '78, so it did not worry us that we could not bring you news on the '78s. However, this year there is apparently a fair amount of interesting new vehicles in the '79 line-up for VW in the U.S.A.

Obviously the American made Rabbit is of greatest interest and fortunately VW was kind enough to let us try one in the early summer. In fact, some VW dealers in different parts of

THE '79s

**NEW, EXCITING AND
UNEXPECTED ADDITIONS TO
THE VW RANGE FOR '79**

the country have been selling the U.S. Rabbit since the beginning of August as the supply of German cars has been dwindling.

We have been in contact with various sources in Germany to try and find out what might be in store at the announcement of the '79 line-up in October. As you can see there are quite a few exciting cars that are rumored to go on sale in the next few months. We hope that most of what we have written will come to pass. We will be able to let you know in the January issue exactly what the U.S. line-up is. Until then read on. VW has told us that there will be some surprises when we see the cars in October. We hope that they mean just that, and not the fact that there might be nothing new—that would be a surprise!

U.S. RABBIT

When VW announced a few years ago that they would be producing Rabbits in the U.S.A. and that they would be built to suit the American taste, a lot of people were worried that the car would be altered so much that it would lose its European characteristics and just be another small Chevy or Ford.

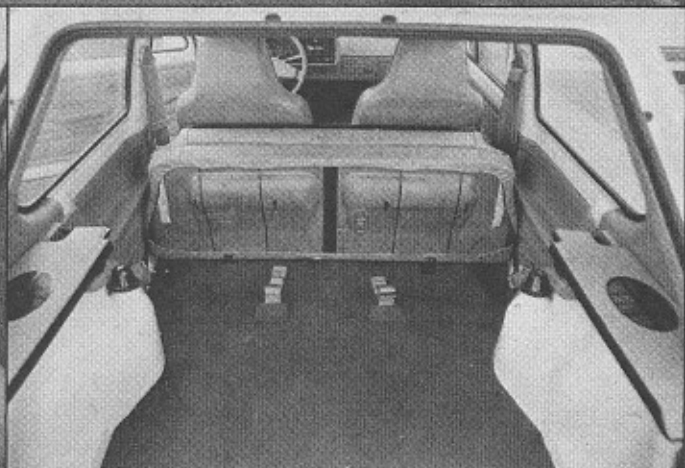
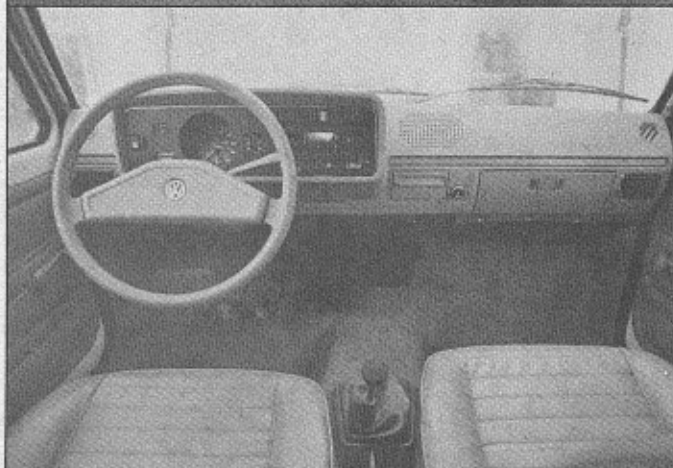
But those people need not worry, the U.S. made Rabbit is so similar to the European car that it is difficult to tell the two apart. The only visual differences are the rectangular headlights and

the vertical repeater lights on the sides of the car. We checked out a U.S. Rabbit beside a German one and found that the body work on the two cars is almost identical. The only differences are a few welds here and there which probably had to be changed as the American Rabbit has a lot more hand welding during manufacture than does the German car.

Volkswagen has found over the years that the main complaint from American car buyers is the lack of options available for European cars. Also German

cars, in particular, seem to specialize in all black interiors whereas the average American buyer likes to have a color coordinated interior complimenting the exterior. As a result the Rabbit has a list of options and models available for '79 that is as long as most you'll find in any U.S. car dealers.

The U.S. Rabbit is available in three versions; a basic 2-door hatchback, custom and deluxe, both available as 2-door or 4-door. All the cars have the 1500cc engine producing 71hp with fuel injection. The thermostat in the engine



THIS PAGE, detail shots of the U.S. made Rabbit show very few differences from the German car. Notable changes are the VW crest on the steering wheel for the first time, a one-piece carpet, provision for stereo speakers in the rear, square vertical side repeater lights and recessed lower side window frames providing more room for the rear seats. RIGHT PAGE, top photos show the wrap around rubber bumpers, similar to those used on the Scirocco that are to appear on the European Golfs and the diesel Rabbit. Lower photos show (left) the European Rabbit and (right) the U.S. Rabbit. Again it's difficult to see any differences between the two models.

now opens at 194° instead of 176° for faster warm-up and better heater performance.

At present the engines and transmissions are being built in Germany and are shipped to the U.S. plant. In fact, little more than 50% of the car is actually constructed in the U.S. at present. However, the percentage is going to rise so that eventually over 75% of the car will be constructed in this country. It will then be classed as an American car.

All the U.S. Rabbits have one-piece moulded carpets, the same color as the colored dashboard and steering wheel. There are four different colors that can be ordered for '79. There are provisions for stereo speakers in each front door and on each side of the rear parcel shelf. All '79 VWs have self-adjusting rear brakes and the front seat belt locks are attached directly to the seat frame.

Apart from all the interior differences there are also exterior packages available for the custom Rabbit. Then there is a "convenience package" with such things as a light in the engine and luggage compartments and a map light. There are similar exterior and interior packages for the deluxe Rabbit, that include such goodies as a remotely controlled right door mirror, upgraded upholstery, door pockets and even a styled gear shift knob! The list of all the options available could fill a few pages in our magazine!

There is one option that will be available for the first time in '79 that sounds quite exciting—the "rally package." Unfortunately it is only a trim package with no performance improvements. However, the package includes black wheel rims with 175/70 radial tires, black bumpers, a large black front spoiler, black wheel flares, black door handles, black grille and black remote control mirrors on both doors. Other non-black stuff includes a dual-tone horn, a stripe package, a sporty steering wheel and a center console with clock, voltmeter and oil temperature gauge. To finish the package off there is a tachometer in the engine turned instrument panel. Judging by the number of slightly customized Rabbits we see on the road, the rally package should prove to be a popular option. The center console and tachometer is also available for the first time on non-rally Rabbits as an option. A five-speed transmission is going to be available as well as on all the German made cars.

It seems that with the large number of packages and options available next year, nobody will have the same car as their neighbor's and that is the American dream, right?

SCIROCCO

Nothing but good news for this exciting car. The Scirocco has become

very popular with a large cross section of the population due to its stunning looks and its good performance and handling. It has become the flagship of VW's new range of cars and has undoubtedly helped establish a good image for the new generation of VWs. For 1979 the engine size reverts to 1600cc and the power output goes back up to 78hp from 71hp for the '78 model. A five-speed manual transmission is available as an option. The European Scirocco has a new dashboard and center console with switches and lights placed on the console. Presumably the same interior will be used on U.S. cars. The front seat headrests will be adjustable, whereas they have been an integral part of the seat until now. The door mirrors will be remotely controlled from inside with the housing fixed and just the mirror moving. There will be a lift-out sunroof available (with tilt action as well) for the first time. Unfortunately, due to the low headroom in the Scirocco, it is not possible to install a sliding sunroof such as is used in the Rabbit.

The really exciting news, though, is that a 130 mph turbo version of the car will be available sooner than expected. Our sources tell us that it is an American only option (which makes for a change!) and that it apparently is only available with automatic transmission. However, it is reported to produce over 140hp which makes it twice as power-





TOP, the '79 Scirocco has no changes externally, but hopefully there will be some surprises under the hood. CENTER, the Polo (left) and the notchback version, called the Derby, are both popular European models that are not sold in this country. ABOVE, the convertible Beetle will be around for another year at least. RIGHT PAGE, the Golf GTI is one of the most popular sporty sedans in Europe, but is unfortunately not available in the U.S.A. The "Rally" Rabbit should look similar.

ful as the present car! It should be a real flier. Powerful American cars such as the Z-28 Camaro, Trans-Am Firebird and Corvette are only available with automatic transmission in California due to the emission requirements, so perhaps VW have run into the same problem with the Turbo Scirocco. Experts in turbo powered cars also claim turbocharged cars with automatic transmission are easier to drive than those with manual transmission.

BEETLE CONVERTIBLE

Originally 1978 was going to be the last year for the Beetle convertible in

DUNE BUGGIES & HOT VWs

the U.S.A., but Congress granted an extension of emission standards for another year, so the Beetle is still with us. In spite of the high \$5700 price tag, the car sold over 13,000 units last year and VW expects sales to be just as good next year.

There are few changes to the car for '79. Whitewall 165 SR 15 steel-belted tires on 4½ J x 15 wheels, a leatherette covered steering wheel and wood-grained dashboard trim are the only notable changes. The European Beetle has the front turn signals incorporated in the bumper, a la Rabbit. Whether the same style will be used on the U.S. model remains to be seen.

BUS, KOMBI AND CAMPMOBILES

Again no changes for this popular range of vehicles. The specially converted Landmark van will be marketed throughout the country if the vehicle proves to be successful on the west coast.

DASHER

The only big news for this range of VWs is the availability of a 1.5 liter diesel engine option. It is the same engine that powers the diesel Rabbit so it will inevitably be rather underpowered. Self-adjusting rear brakes will be added to all cars as will an AM/FM stereo radio. The four door car will be a hatchback version replacing the model with the standard trunk.

DIESEL RABBIT

The diesel version of the Rabbit will continue to be imported from Germany. This means that it will be slightly different from the gas powered Rabbit. The European Golfs will have rubber wrap-around bumpers similar to those on the Scirocco and Dasher and it will continue to have round headlights. This means the '79 diesel will be quite distinctive from the gas Rabbit. The five-speed manual transmission will be available as an option which will give the car a phenomenal mileage rating on long journies. A turbocharged diesel Rabbit is also in the development stages, but will probably not be introduced for a while as production of the diesel cannot keep up with sales at present.

A LARGE VW?

There have been strong rumors for several months that VW is going to produce a VW version of the Audi 5000 with different front and rear end treatment. However, it has also been reported that the group has decided to make Audi the larger and more expensive range of cars, with Volkswagen being the high volume company.

CABRIOLET RABBIT

A targa version of the Rabbit has been talked about for some time. Apparently it is slated for introduction early next year. Our sources tell us that the car has been seen and that it's more

of a convertible than a targa. One person told us that it looks like a Rabbit version of the VW Thing!

NOTCHBACK RABBIT

The notchback version (called the Derby) of VW's small car, the Polo, has proved to be far more popular in Europe than VW ever expected. In fact they sell as many notchbacks as hatchbacks. It seems natural, therefore, that a notchback version of the Rabbit would also be a hit with those families that need as much luggage space as possible. Apparently a notchback version of the Rabbit is due to start production in the spring of '79.

EUROPEAN RABBIT

As mentioned in the paragraph on the diesel Rabbit, the European cars will have wrap-around rubber bumpers similar to the Scirocco. Also, the switches and warning lights have been moved to a console between the front seats. Whether the same changes will be adapted for the U.S. Rabbit or not remains to be seen.

PICK UP RABBIT

Again we still have no definite news about when it will be introduced, but the rumors are so strong that we expect it to be announced in the new year. It would appear that it will be built in the U.S. factory and may not even be available in Europe. ●

