



# VOLKSWAGEN SCIROCCO 5-SPEED

*If you liked the Scirocco before, well . . .*



THE REQUIRED OBJECTIVITY of an R&T road test can be a very difficult problem. In the case of the love-hate cars the writer has to balance the oftentimes contradictory thoughts of the many staff members who drive and make written comments about each test car, in an attempt to produce a staff consensus. At the other end of the scale are the cars so admired by the staff that virtually all their notes are complimentary. Such are the staff's feelings about the Volkswagen Scirocco.

Why? Probably because there is little the Scirocco does wrong. It is a nice, tight design that is visually pleasing and almost more efficient than one would expect from a car tagged as a sport coupe. The car is quick, handles nicely, stops short and true, has good steering response, the seats are comfortable, the ventilation is excellent . . . and on and on. Certainly there are a few nitpicking complaints, as one staff member thought the pedals weren't quite where he liked them for heel-and-toeing, another wrote that the steering might be a little slow for tighter turns, while one driver thought the shocks a mite too soft which ". . . results in a little floating over undulating roads taken at speed (90+ mph) . . ." Good heavens, many of the cars we test are downright frightening at 90 mph. Then someone wrote, ". . . I'd want to spend a long distance in the car before committing myself to the worth of the severe contouring of the seatback, however . . ." which just goes to show the length some writers will go to get a certain car for the weekend.

By now you may have gotten the impression that the only reason we had the car for testing was just to enjoy it again. Admirable as that reason may be, there have been changes to the Scirocco of late that justify this new test. Having last been tested by R&T in February, 1978 means we've seen the Scirocco return to a displacement of 1588 cc from the doldrums of the 1457 cc to which VW sent it during 1978. The calls for the return to power were answered and so we're back to 78 bhp at 5500 rpm and 84 lb-ft of torque at 3200, an increase of 8 bhp and 11 lb-ft—and we're delighted to have it, though our test car was a California version with 76 bhp and 83 lb-ft. To add to the pleasure is an optional 5-speed manual transmission. VW kept the same original four gears, including the 0.97:1 overdrive 4th, and added a 0.76:1 5th cog. With this lower numerical gearing VW also raised the final drive ratio, going from 3.90:1 to 4.17:1. The result of all this ratio juggling should be to make the 5-speed version faster and more fuel efficient than the 4-speed.

It didn't quite work out that way when we ran the car for numbers, however, as we recorded 11.2 seconds from 0 to 60 mph versus 10.4 when we tested the 1457-cc version. These are the →

## AT A GLANCE

	Volkswagen Scirocco	Honda Prelude	Toyota Celica Liftback
List price	\$7265	\$6445	\$6559
Curb weight, lb	2040	2150	2505
Engine	inline 4	inline 4	inline 4
Transmission	5-sp M	5-sp M	5-sp M
0-60 mph, sec	11.2	11.5	10.4
Standing ¼ mi, sec	18.4	18.7	18.1
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	74.5	74.0	77.5
Stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	140	152	151
Interior noise at 50 mph, dBA	70	71	67
Lateral acceleration, g	0.766	0.743	0.688
Slalom speed, mph	60.8	58.2	59.3
Fuel economy, mpg	24.5	23.5	22.5

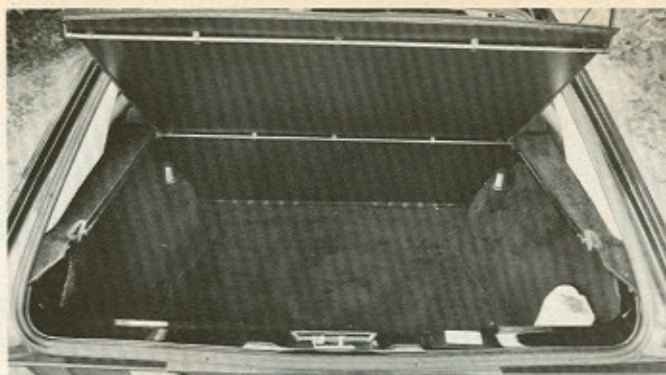
times when the road test writer scratches his head and goes to the Engineering Editor asking, "Now how the hell did that happen?"

In fact, weight differences are the likely culprits: The smaller-engine car we had previously run weighed 1950 lb at the curb and 2055 lb as tested. By contrast, our new limited-edition Scirocco was 90 lb heavier at the curb; strap in a different Engineering Editor from the previous test, and the as-tested weight was 2230 lb, an increase of 175 lb—or like carrying an additional passenger. At any rate, what really matters is that the Scirocco has sufficient power to please most every driver who would consider buying one, really performing from 3500 rpm up and comfortably revving right to 6000 rpm. Our only complaints, and they're minor ones, would be of occasional stalling when cold and some roughness at idle when the air conditioner is on.

The 5-speed is a perfect companion for the Scirocco engine, having that same smooth, effortless quality about it that implies it has been well thought out and engineered. The matching of the gearbox ratios to the engine's characteristics follows that same theme, 1st and 2nd being correct for low-speed work, 3rd and 4th ideal for curving roads and 5th just right for cruising. While the overall mileage number of 24.5 mpg is well below the 29.0 mpg of our last Scirocco test, the latter number was trip mileage with a fair amount of freeway time, while the 5-speed was driven hard with far less cruising mileage. We should add that we've received a number of letters from readers commenting on the excellent highway mileage they've gotten with their 5-speed Sciroccos.

The particular car we tested was a limited-edition model with Recaro seats, which provided excellent lateral support, and plaid cloth inserts to add some color to the otherwise somber interior.

There are no other changes of note in the interior of the Scirocco and that's just fine with us. Everything is already well placed, whether it needs to be looked at or reached for, unless you are fascinated by engine oil temperature since that gauge is on the center console. An extra word has to be said about the very good ventilation system. Not only does it circulate a great deal of air with or without the air conditioning on, but when you need fan boosting, the fan is very quiet, an unusual feature in all too few imports these days.

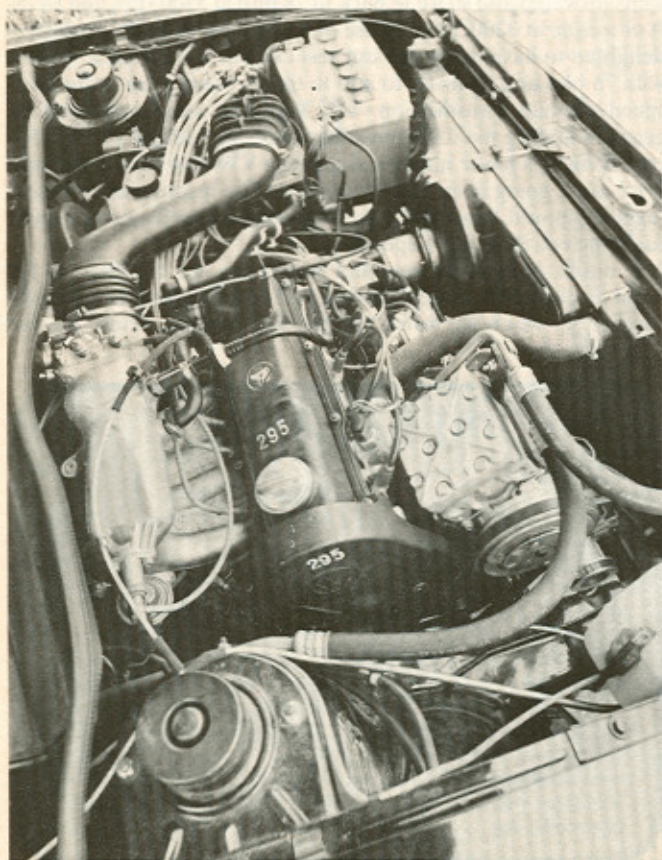


Back to the mechanical side of things, we also found little changed, again to our pleasure. The Scirocco remains one of the better balanced, more responsive cars we've driven. The balance comes in the compromise between handling and ride, reaching a high level with the former while giving up little in the latter. Driven properly, the Scirocco exhibits a benign sort of understeer that's easily overcome and a fair amount of body roll, though that isn't upsetting either. More than likely, curves are taken with the power on early for a front-drive car, the modulation of that power varying the grip (and direction) of the front wheels.

But the Scirocco also has that important balance that means the power, handling, ride, steering, comfort and brakes are all in proper proportion. The steering, for instance, has a good blend of effort and road feel, while the brakes gave short stopping distances with little lockup and good control from 80 mph and no lockup and excellent control from 60 mph. All that and 0.766g on the skidpad and 60.8 mph through the slalom, too.

The limited-edition Scirocco has some obvious external differences: a deep front air dam and some special stripes and trim. Much of what is available on that model, minus the stripes and trim, will be available in 1980 as the Scirocco S model. We've already recommended the seats and while we find the spoiler very attractive, we also cracked it several times in the course of normal driving, so a buyer will have to be careful with that.

This leaves only the question—or should the word be problem?—of price. The situation is the familiar one of the dollar versus Deutsche Mark, which at this writing had the Scirocco base price at \$7265, with an additional \$555 for the limited-edition package. That seems to be a great deal of money, especially since we've seen the Scirocco grow in price from its initial \$4450 in 1975. If you measure your automobiles on a tight cost-per-mile basis, you'd best look elsewhere, but if you truly enjoy driving, the Scirocco comes close to being a bargain. One of our staff writers commented that, "I'd even spend my own money for one," which is quite a commitment from a guy who makes his living driving other people's cars.





#### PRICE

List price, all POE	\$7265
Price as tested	\$8710
Price as tested includes limited-edition package (\$555), air cond (\$535), alloy wheels (\$185), rear-window wiper/washer (\$85), Calif. emissions equip (\$85)	

#### GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg	2040	926
Test weight	2230	1012
Weight distribution (with driver), f/r, %	65/35	
Wheelbase, in./mm	94.5	2400
Track, front/rear	54.7/53.5	1389/1359
Length	155.7	3955
Width	63.9	1623
Height	51.5	1308
Trunk space, cu ft./liters	8.2 + 7.2	232 + 204
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters	10.6	40

#### ENGINE

Type	sohc inline 4
Bore x stroke, in./mm	3.13 x 3.15 / 79.5 x 80.0
Displacement, cu in./cc	97.0 / 1588
Compression ratio	8.0:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net/kW	76/57 @ 5500
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm	83/113 @ 3200
Fuel injection	Bosch K-Jetronic
Fuel requirement	unleaded, 91-oct

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.76)	3.17:1
4th (0.97)	4.04:1
3rd (1.37)	5.71:1
2nd (1.94)	8.09:1
1st (3.45)	14.39:1
Final drive ratio	4.17:1

#### CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	front engine/front drive
Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	9.4-in. (239-mm) discs front, 7.1 x 1.19-in. (180 x 30-mm) drums rear; vacuum assisted
Wheels	cast alloy, 13 x 5J
Tires	Goodyear Grand Prix S70, 175/70SR-13
Steering type	rack & pinion
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.8
Suspension, front/rear	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks/trailing arms interconnected by L-beam anti-roll bar, coil springs, tube shocks

#### CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)	29.3
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	24.5
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	2450
R&T steering index	1.19
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	214

## ROAD TEST RESULTS

#### ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	3.3
0-500 ft	9.7
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	18.4
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	74.5
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	3.1
0-50 mph	7.7
0-60 mph	11.2
0-70 mph	15.8
0-80 mph	22.7

#### SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (4650 rpm)	108
4th (5600)	108
3rd (6250)	84
2nd (6250)	57
1st (6250)	33

#### FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	24.5
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#### BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	140
From 80 mph	250
Control in panic stop	excellent
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	35
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph	29
Overall brake rating	excellent

#### HANDLING

Lateral acceleration, g	0.766
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	60.8

#### INTERIOR NOISE

Constant 30 mph, dBA	64
50 mph	70
70 mph	73

#### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually	27.5
60 mph	58.5

#### ACCELERATION

