

# 1975 VW SPOTTERS GUIDE

In the beginning, there was the Volkswagen Beetle. Two of them, to be exact. That was in 1949, VW's first year in the U.S. That tremendous sales figure was matched the next year, just in the sales of the new VW van and Volkswagen added a whole 328 Beetles. Heady stuff. When 417 of the roundy cars came to the U.S. in 1951, it was obvious a trend was underway.

Max Hoffman, until recently the sole U.S. importer for BMW, brought in those first Beetles and by 1954 had annual sales up to 9000. The factory took over in '55, forming Volkswagen of America and increasing sales to 35,851. The next year, the Karmann Ghia was added and in 1958, the convertible version of the Beetle was introduced. Then for sev-

en years the designers rested and the salesmen went to work.

There is little need to bore you with the two-hundredth recounting of Volkswagen's sales success in the Sixties. After picking up momentum in the Fifties and adding the Type 3 (better known by its popular nicknames—"Fastback" and "Squareback") in 1965, VW achieved 569,696 annual sales by the end of 1970.

But that was their peak year. Despite picking up the 411 model in 1971 (it became the 412 in 1972 and died at the end of the 1974 model year), the sales charts took on that painful, far-side-of-the-Alps look as the sales zig-zagged down to 334,515 last year, and that despite the new front-drive Dasher and the fuel crisis.

It would appear that the present

revamping of the Volkswagen line is more than just an exercise in new car previews.

Ironically, after all the ads, sales and hoopla, the two old models that remain in the VW line are the originals, the Beetle and the van. The latter is properly called the Type 2 and with its chameleon nature presents itself as any of four different vehicles—the bus, the campmobile, the kombi or the panel truck. For the most part, though, it is the good old VW van. It can't go on forever, of course, and is already scheduled for replacement by, you guessed it, a front-drive van.

The Beetle has been given a greater personality change. Most of us have one

Thanks to the 94th Aero Squadron Restaurant, Orange County Airport



Beetle in our past for reference, and in my case it is my wife's 1961 model. Before it was wrecked and hauled off to a salvage yard eight years ago, it provided the yeoman service most of us have come to expect from Beetles. Interestingly, that same basic sort of Beetle has survived, though its bright colors and fashionable (and cheap) black paint trim make it look more like my wife's Bug in drag. In its most basic form, the car is still noisy and the dash remains spartan, with only a few switches and one all-inclusive dial. Most important, this Beetle is still inexpensive to operate.

There is an additional Beetle now, one quite different than the basic car. In their typical tongue-in-cheek manner, VW has tagged this luxury version, "Le Grande Bug." Driving it is like finding out that the svelt, neat, slightly ferocious girl you loved in college has turned into a fashionable, well-rounded, if slightly fleshy,

matron—with full stereo sound. VW's redone the dash, added more switches and gauges and even built-in air conditioning vents. The interior could leave the impression she might not be so much a matron as a madame. But, VW has managed to subdue that typical Beetle engine noise to a faraway "ru-m-m-m" and at \$3395, its base price is more than competitive with similar offerings from Toyota or Datsun.

Le Grand Bug also has a MacPherson strut front suspension as opposed to the other Beetle's traditional trailing arm/torsion bar setup. Suffice to say, it is not without good reason that VW puts the MacPherson on the better Beetle. The main benefits are lower steering effort and more trunk space. All Beetles now have electronically fuel injected engines.

Those same air-cooled engines have been one of the Beetle's greatest selling points. Each is rugged, not particularly thirsty and if it breaks you can virtually remove the engine and fix it in your driveway. At least you could before such niceties as air conditioning and fuel injection turned it into a plumbing nightmare.

That leaves a curious question as we now slide over to the new VWs. Beginning with the Dasher and now the Rabbit and Scirocco, the new trend is water-cooled and front-engine, front drive VWs. Were all

those cute VW ads a lie?

Well, here is the official word from VW and it seems to make sense. First, air-cooled engines are difficult to de-smog. Water cooling offers a more uniform temperature control. To add water cooling, the logical course was to move the engine to the front. That brings up the second reason for the new designs. European mini cars have been proving for 15 years now that the best small car package dictates a complete front engine, front drivetrain. Hordes of Austin Minis, Fiats, Peugeots and now even Audis and Alfa Romeos are the proof. Citroen's 40 years of experience with front wheel drive should quail any fears about that part of the system. The package VW chose for their new cars wasn't that simple though, and in one of their earlier prototypes, they had a flat four-cylinder engine under the rear seat of a small, squarish sedan. It was reported to have suffered overheating problems.

So for the sake of emissions and packaging, VW has completely reversed their field. They made it even easier for themselves by using the same basic engine for all their new models. Hence, the 89.7-cubic-inch, overhead-cam engine first seen here in the Dasher is now also in the Rabbit and Scirocco.

The first of the three upstarts, the Dasher, is the only one that has the engine installed in the conventional manner, that is north-to-south. This



is the car designed to fill the hole left by the demise of the Type 3 and, shall we say, the unfortunate 412. The Dasher has Guigiaro styling, as do all new VWs including the Rabbit and Scirocco, in four forms, two- and four-door sedans, a two-door hatchback and a four-door wagon. The car shares many of the same mechanical innards as the Audi Fox. In fact, until the Audi went to electronic fuel injection

this year, the cars were virtually mechanically identical. Too identical, some Audi dealers will tell you.

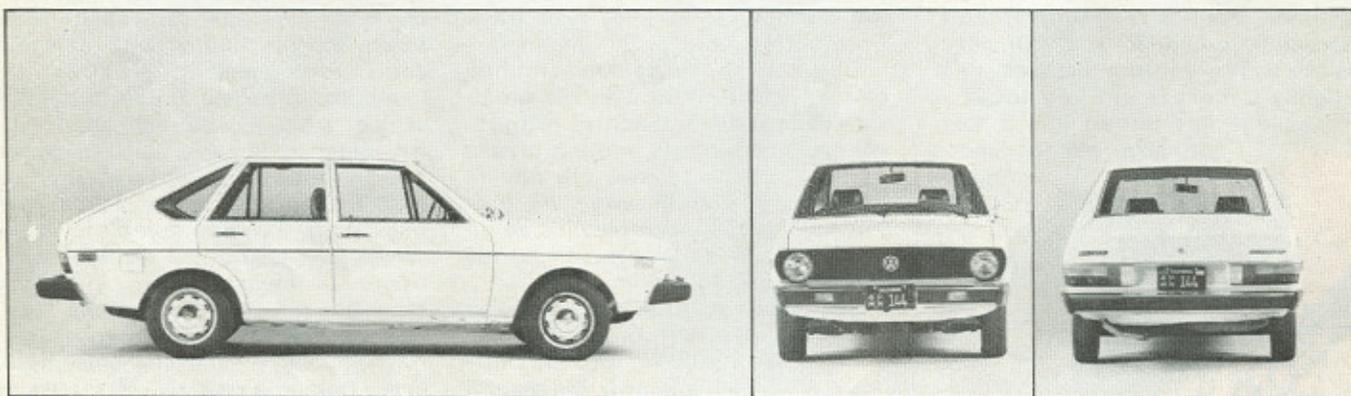
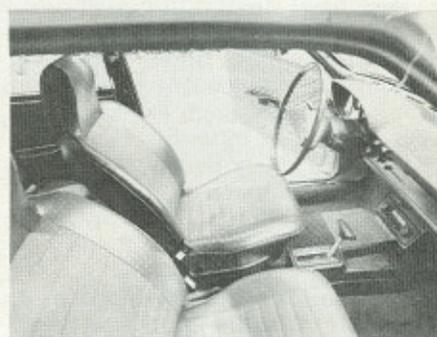
We've printed hundreds of words about the Rabbit and Scirocco in their short life in the U.S. For these two mechanically-identical cars, the engine is transverse, or east-to-west. The boxy styling is also there, along with the usual German attention to detail. The Rabbit comes in two ver-

sions, with two or four doors, while the Scirocco (the Karmann Ghia's replacement) is just a two-door. All have hatchbacks.

VW gets pained every time someone suggests it, but the Beetle is a lame duck model. Certainly we will see it until at least 1980. Not that it needs to be written off like another Detroit model that is unceremoniously dumped without so much as a

SPECIFICATIONS	VW DASHER
Engine	overhead cam, in-line four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.01 x 3.15
Displacement—cu. in./liters	89.7/1.4
HP@RPM	71@5800
Torque—(lbs.-ft. @ RPM)	80@4000
Transmission	three-speed automatic
Wheelbase—in./mm	97.2/2468.8
Overall Length—in./mm	172.8/4368.8
Width—in./mm	63/1600.2
Weight as Tested—lbs.	2155
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	11.9/45

Base Price	\$4915
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	3.5
0-50 mph (seconds)	8.5
Stand Start ¼-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	20
Speed—mph	68.1
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	27.25
60-0 mph	118.25
Fuel Mileage	30.5



SPECIFICATIONS	VW VAN (CAMPMOBILE)
Engine	OHV opposed four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.66 x 2.59
Displacement—cu. in./liters	109.5/1.8
HP@RPM	67@4400
Torque—(lbs.-ft. @ RPM)	90@2400
Transmission	four-speed manual
Wheelbase—in./mm	94.5/2400.3
Overall Length—in./mm	179/4546.6
Width—in./mm	69.3/1760.2
Weight as Tested—lbs.	3141
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	14.8

Base Price	\$6924 (for complete campmobile)
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	6.4
0-50 mph (seconds)	14.2
Stand Start ¼-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	N.A.
Speed—mph	N.A.
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	N.A.
60-0 mph	N.A.
Fuel Mileage	22.1



press release. The Beetle got too many of us through a lot of cheap miles at a time when Detroit insisted there was no real market for the car.

The Rabbit, Dasher and Scirocco are "future" cars, with option lists that include automatic transmission, air conditioning, all sorts of radios ... well, use your imagination. They will also be a touch of future shock for some potential buyers, because

they are typical of one sort of car that will get us through to the end of this century. They are light, around one ton, with sufficient room for two or four normal-size people. That light weight may be the most critical point of all. It not only allowed 35 miles per gallon in our test, but 18-second quarter miles and a claimed top speed of 93 miles per hour.

But the weight isn't there for

another reason. If you think the whole fuel mileage/inflation question is going to end when we trim that critical 1,000,000 barrels of oil per day out of our national usage, you're kidding yourself. The problem is that more goes into an automobile than just gasoline and oil. There is plastic, aluminum, chromium, steel, rubber ... the list is as long as an accountant's arm. And guess who owns

SPECIFICATIONS	VW RABBIT
Engine	overhead cam, in-line four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.01 x 3.15
Displacement—cu. in./liters	89.7/1.4
HP@RPM	70@5800
Torque—(lbs.-ft. @RPM)	81@3500
Transmission	four-speed manual
Wheelbase—in./mm	94.5/2400.3
Overall Length—in./mm	155.3/3944.6
Width—in./mm	63.4/1610.3
Weight as Tested—lbs.	1870
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	11.9/45

Base Price	\$2999
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	5.2
0-50 mph (seconds)	11
Stand Start 1/4-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	18.1
Speed—mph	74.2
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	24.2
60-0 mph	121
Fuel Mileage	34.9



SPECIFICATIONS	VW SCIROCCO
Engine	overhead cam, in-line four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.01 x 3.15
Displacement—cu. in./liters	89.7/1.4
HP@RPM	70@5800
Torque—(lbs.-ft. @RPM)	81@3500
Transmission	four-speed manual
Wheelbase—in./mm	94.5/2400.3
Overall Length—in./mm	155.7/3954.7
Width—in./mm	64/1624
Weight as Tested—lbs.	1905
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	11.9/45

Base Price	\$4450
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	3.5
0-50 mph (seconds)	8.2
Stand Start 1/4-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	17.8
Speed—mph	76.3
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	24
60-0 mph	103.25
Fuel Mileage	30.4



a fair share of those precious natural resources? A new bloc of nations called the Third World.

So the cost of most everything that goes into the automobile is pumping up prices. General Motors and Ford have already announced the general reduction in the size of their automobiles and smack dab in the middle of those plans are cars that resemble, at least in size and specification, the

VW Dasher and Rabbit. VW already has a new, smaller sort of Rabbit, called the Polo, in production.

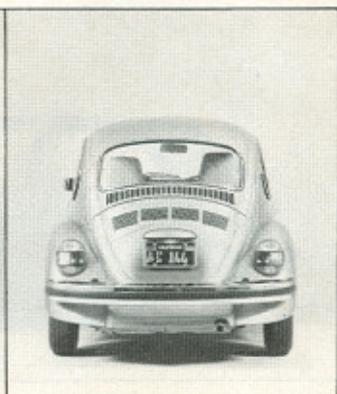
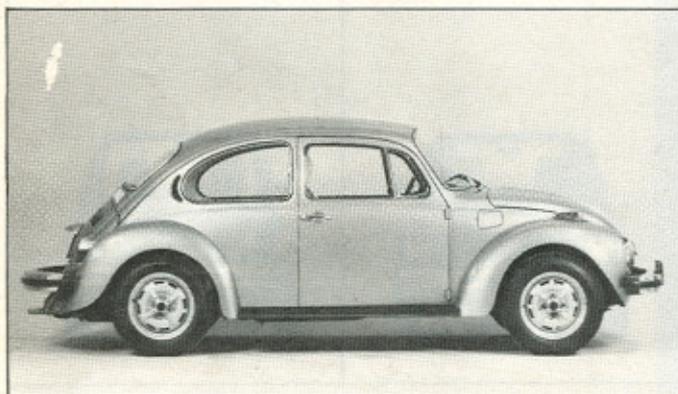
Now if all this sounds depressing, it should... if you are a fan of 232-inch long Lincolns. But if you like small, light and efficient automobiles, be reassured because the one universal comment we have heard from readers who have driven the Rabbit and Scirocco is how much fun they

are to drive. FUN. Do you realize how long it has been since we heard that word with regularity?

After all that, you're probably wondering why we kept mention of the Thing to a minimum. Well, the Thing is, after all, a fringe item. It may be versatile and fun (there's that word again), but where the Beetle may be a lame duck, the Thing is an odd duck. ■

SPECIFICATIONS	LE GRANDE BUG
Engine	ohv opposed four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.37 x 2.72
Displacement—cu. in./liters	96.6/1.5
HP@RPM	48@4200
Torque—(lbs.-ft.@RPM)	73.1@4200
Transmission	four-speed manual
Wheelbase—in./mm	94.5/2400.3
Overall Length—in./mm	163.4/4150.5
Width—in./mm	61/1549.4
Weight as Tested—lbs.	2065
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	10.6/39.2

Base Price	\$3395
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	5.2
0-50 mph (seconds)	13.1
Stand Start ¼-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	20.4
Speed—mph	64.6
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	26.5
60-0 mph	129.9
Fuel Mileage	25.3



SPECIFICATIONS	VW BEETLE
Engine	ohv opposed four-cylinder
Bore & Stroke—ins.	3.37 x 2.72
Displacement—cu. in./liters	96.6/1.5
HP@RPM	48@4200
Torque—(lbs.-ft.@RPM)	73.1@4200
Transmission	four-speed manual
Wheelbase—in./mm	94.5/2400.3
Overall Length—in./mm	163.4/4150.3
Width—in./mm	61/1549.4
Weight as Tested—lbs.	1810
Fuel Capacity—gals./liters	10.6/39.2

Base Price	\$2895
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph (seconds)	4.3
0-50 mph (seconds)	11.75
Stand Start ¼-mile	
Elapsed Time—seconds	19.6
Speed—mph	66.1
Stopping Distance—feet	
30-0 mph	23.5
60-0 mph	134.5
Fuel Mileage	26 (in automatic Stickshift model)

