

The Recaro Scirocco:

An exercise in "Ulti-Motion"

by Peter Frey



PPC PHOTOGRAPHIC

In any field of endeavor, there will occasionally crop up bits of hardware to which the word "ultimate" can be applied. In the arena of international relations, the atomic bomb is an "ultimate" device that exerts considerable influence, as do the fledgling efforts of the brothers Wright, which seem unimaginably distant when sipping champagne while travelling faster than the speed of sound aboard the SST, another "ultimate" collection of machinery.

The human need for bodily comfort has exerted a profound influence on inventive people, and has produced a diversity of ways to cater to that need unmatched at any time in history. From Earth shoes to water beds, the tenderness of the flesh is the subject of much devising.

In this vein, the Recaro seat company has introduced the IdealSeat C, which, by any standards, is the atomic bomb of driving seats.

The introduction of the "C" seat then prompted Recaro USA to create a mobile showcase for it. The car chosen was the VW Scirocco you see pictured. In an effort to bring the showcase into par with the product being displayed, modifications were made that raised the Sciroc-

co's performance to levels that, while not quite "ultimate," were impressively close.

Since the car was built to showcase the seats, they are the first logical topic of discussion. The first indication of anything out of the ordinary is the graphic-modern, multicolored striped insert in the center of the seat, each stripe bearing the embossed Recaro name. Attention is then drawn to the rectangular control panel set into the side bolster. The panel contains seven buttons and switches that control the powered functions of the seat.

One button activates a heating mechanism that quickly warms the seat to 97° F. Another button controls the motor, which reclines or elevates the seat back. There is also a switch to select which way you want the sound from your radio to go, whether it be out through the regular car speakers, or through those speakers located in the headrests of the seat. The passenger seat has a separate switch to turn its speakers off, allowing the passenger to doze in blissful silence while the driver rocks and rolls on down the road.

The remaining rocker switch and three blue pushbuttons control the penultimate bit of trickery, a compressor mounted in

the base of the seat that inflates three bladders in the base of the seat back, the lumbar support area. The three buttons individually deflate the three bladders in any desired amount to contour the shape of the support to the the shape of one's spine.

The remaining features are mechanically operated and include fore-and-aft seat positioning, adjustment of the seat back above one's shoulder blades and arrangement of lateral support from four bolsters which can be moved in or out to accommodate any width of physique. There is also a cushion under the thighs that is adjustable in and out—a blessing to the long-legged.

Now, the kicker. The base price is \$995.00—each. After you have completed your sharp intake of breath and checked that you read the price correctly, remember that "ultimates" have never come cheap. And, considering how much time you spend in a car, if you can afford such luxuries, the idea of seats like these isn't that outrageous.

So now, let's consider the showcase that Recaro built to display them. The Scirocco, with its distinctly Italian styling, aggressive yet elegant, is a good choice

continued on page 98

The Recaro Scirocco

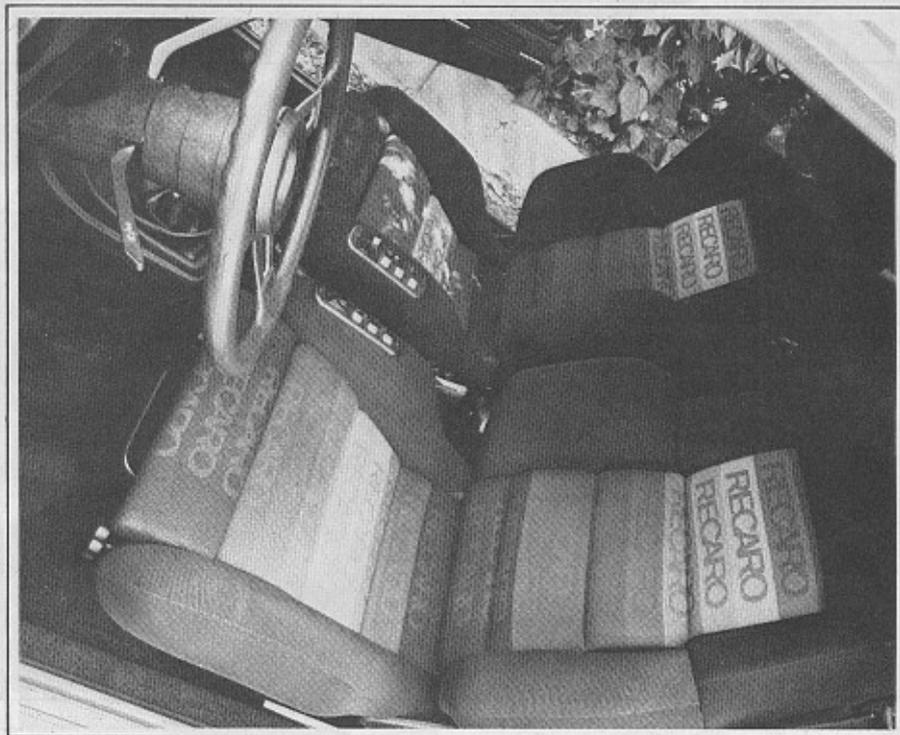
continued from page 91

on both aesthetic and mechanical grounds. What you get from the factory is a fair performer, but one which cries out for the hand of some enthusiast craftsman to massage it gently and cause the hot wind, for which the Scirocco is named, to blow more fiercely.

The engine was modified by replacing the stock head with one from a European version of the Scirocco, the GTi, which has larger valves and stronger valve springs. This raised the compression ratio to 9.5:1 (necessitating a switch to premium fuel) and allowed the engine to rev to 7000 rpm. A hotter cam was installed and S&S headers were fitted. The fuel-injection system was altered by changing the metering head and air flow sensor to similar pieces from an injected 4-cylinder Volvo and replacing the warm-up regulator with one from an Audi 5000. The ignition timing was slightly altered and a restriction in the throttle body was removed. The engine had not been put on a dyno to instrument the gains made, but knowledgeable speculation places horsepower at around 110, a significant step up from the 71 horsepower claimed by the factory.

The increases in power and torque are reflected in the test figures detailed in the comparison chart, and they reflect an across-the-board increase in performance. The price to be paid for it is the decline in gas mileage. We got 22.1 mpg around our test loop, as opposed to the 28.38 mpg generated by the stock version.

The real-life side of all this is that the car is vastly more driveable. Power flows



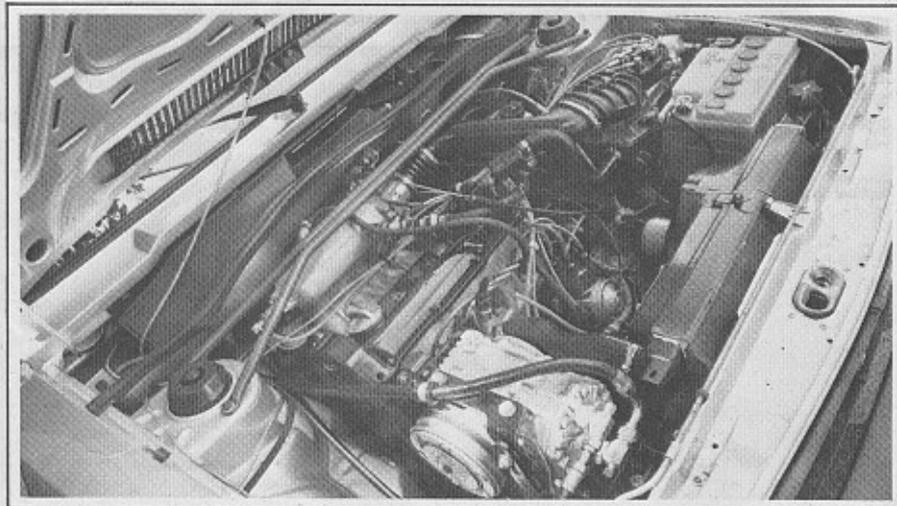
smoothly to the front wheels (which show surprisingly little signs of the dreaded "torque steer"), becoming particularly apparent above 4500 rpm. The power isn't staggering, but it does make hurrying your way through traffic a pleasantly precise and competitive business.

It would have been inconsistent with the nature of the project to bring the engine to life and leave the suspension alone, so it, too, received special attention. The stock springs were replaced with shorter ones from the GTi which

lowered the car about an inch. Bilstein shock absorbers, set at the "comfort" level, replaced the stock units, and anti-roll bars manufactured by Quickor were fitted, one in the front and two in the rear, one above and one below the axle. The reason for the seemingly odd setup was to try and eliminate the natural tendency of a front-wheel-drive car to understeer when flung smartly into a turn. The results proved out the experiment, as the car was neutral up to the limit where over- or under-steer could be decided by how one chose to enter the corner.

The remaining modifications involved replacing the front suspension bushings with those of a harder material, adjusting one degree of negative camber into the front wheels, and fitting the front subframe with stiffening braces designed to minimize chassis flex under hard cornering. The most visible part of the package were the 5.5 x 15-inch ATS wheels wrapped with some of the most expensive and effective rubber in the world, Pirelli P7s. To bring the performance of the brakes up to the level needed, the stock rotors were replaced with ventilated ones, and the brake calipers were exchanged for a 4-piston version made by the German firm ATE.

Driving the Recaro Scirocco produces a consistently high-quality stream of sensory input. The headrest stereo system is superb, engulfing your ears in a globe of music. The control panel is right out of "Star Wars." The g forces produced in acceleration, cornering, and braking tug at you, as the scene being played on your windshield flows past at any rate you please, up to and including a blur. With the air conditioning on just a trickle, one can create a cool, detached environment that perfectly suits the nature of the car. And, in the middle of it all, you sit, master of the machine, in a throne well and truly fit for a king.



ACCELERATION

	Stock Scirocco	Recaro Scirocco
0-30 mph	4.3 secs.	3.2 secs.
0-40 mph	6.9 secs.	5.4 secs.
0-50 mph	9.9 secs.	8.1 secs.
0-60 mph	14.6 secs.	10.1 secs.
0-70 mph	19.0 secs.	14.8 secs.
0-80 mph	26.1 secs.	20.1 secs.
Standing quarter mile	19.5 secs./72 mph	17.7 secs./78 mph

BRAKING

30-0 mph	23 ft.	22 ft.
60-0 mph	126 ft.	100 ft.