



# Fuego vs. Scirocco vs. Fuego Turbo



To paraphrase Chico Escuela, Scirocco been bery, bery good to Volkswagen. By taking its largest volume sedan (the Rabbit) and surrounding it with a swoopy Giugiaro-styled body, VW created a sexy, high-profit sports coupe that immediately had buyers lined up 'round the block.

To understate things a bit, the original Scirocco was an unqualified success. But nothing stays the same, and as its response to the world fuel crunch VW restyled the Scirocco for the '82 model year with the emphasis on aerodynamics. Although the second generation car came out larger and heavier than the original, VW had done its aero homework well enough—the Scirocco's Cd is pegged at 0.39—to produce improved EPA ratings.

While all this was going on in Germany, the men who guide the fortunes of *Régie Nationale des Usines Renault* were watching with keen interest. It didn't take them much time to get the message, and before long Renault decided to do up a sport coupe of its own, using the 18 sedan platform. Unlike Volkswagen, the French company designed its coupe entirely in-house. Called the Fuego, the Renault entry differed from the Scirocco in one important area: The Régie designers did not compromise rear seating for the sake of a stylishly low roofline. Aerodynamics were of concern to the French designers, of course; in fact, the Fuego boasts a 0.35 drag figure, lower than the Scirocco without using add-on spoilers or other such protuberances.

The Scirocco is powered by the same 1715cc aluminum-head OHC engine used in both the Rabbit and Quantum. With 74 hp on tap, the engine exhibits an amazing willingness to rev all the way up to its

7000-rpm redline. The Scirocco *loves* to be wound out. Unfortunately, this driving style is neither economical nor peaceful. When wound out, the engine starts to make its presence known to the ear by 4200 rpm. The fuel-injected 4-cylinder powerplant is mated to VW's 4+E manual

gearbox (a 3-speed automatic is optional). The manual transmission features overdrive ratios in both 4th and 5th gears. This has had a mixed effect on the Scirocco's driveability. The very tall top gear, in conjunction with an axle ratio that reduces down to 2.76:1 in top, helps keep the buzzy engine quieter at cruising speeds. But it al-

so makes accelerating in top gear very, very difficult, if not downright slow.

Unlike the VW sport coupe, Renault offers the Fuego buyer a choice of normally aspirated or turbocharged powerplants. Both Renault engines have hemi heads, aluminum blocks with cast iron cylinder liners, and Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection. The 1647cc normally aspirated engine produces 82 hp, or approximately 10% more than the Scirocco. Like the VW, the Fuego features a 5-speed manual transmission as standard equipment, with Renault's electronically controlled 3-speed automatic gearbox an option on the unblown Fuego. The selection of transmission ratios is better on the Fuego than the VW, but the shift linkage has a rubbery feel that is absent from the German car. The balky shifter makes driving the Fuego a bit of an ordeal at times. In spite of better gear spacing in the transmission and 8 more hp, the normally aspirated Fuego is no faster than the Scirocco; this is due primarily to the Renault's additional *avoirdupois*.

Not suprisingly, the Fuego Turbo can move out quickly. Displacing 1565 cc, the pushrod 4-cylinder engine incorporates a Garrett AiResearch TO3 blower and air-to-air intercooler. The turbo and intercooler conspire to raise engine output to 107 hp, a full 33 hp stronger than the Scirocco. While the normally aspirated Fuego ran four tenths of a second slower than the Scirocco in the quarter mile, the turbocharged version ran through the traps 0.73 sec faster, with a 4.6-mph higher terminal speed.

Holding to the principle of building its sport coupe from available bits and pieces, VW lifted the majority of the Scirocco's suspension componentry straight off the Rabbit. Roadholding had been one of the first-generation Scirocco's strong points, but when the VW coupe was about to re-

by Jim Hall

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETERSEN PHOTOGRAPHIC

The Fuego is  
as French as  
the Scirocco  
is German

## The Fuego is making a bid for a piece of the Scirocco's territory, and doing it at a lower price



Fuego Turbo

Fuego

Scirocco



Fuego



Scirocco

ceive its new aerodynamically styled sheet metal, the engineering crew at Wolfsburg softened the springs and shocks. Although this suspension tuning hasn't penalized the VW much in the area of lateral g, it has inflicted the car with a good deal of roll during spirited cornering, something quite new for a Scirocco. The rack-and-pinion steering is unchanged from the original Scirocco, still giving the driver plenty of feel as to what's going on with the 175/70SR13 Michelin XZs. That feeling is still one of high competency, but it's definitely not the Scirocco most people remember—and love.

Using the Renault 18 as the starting platform for the Fuego meant the Régie's

### Both the Scirocco and the Fuego look the part for the aerodynamic '80s

coupe would mount its engine longitudinally ahead of the front axle centerline rather than transversely, as in the VW. The Fuego's MacPherson-strut front suspension (similar to that of the Scirocco) works

well enough even though the car uses a solid rear axle in contrast to the Scirocco's independent rear suspension. The Fuego is nowhere near as much fun to drive as the Scirocco, owing mainly to power steering that has a bit too much boost, springs and shocks that seem much too soft for a car with the Fuego's sporting pretensions, and the aforementioned higher weight.

The 165/70R365 Michelin TRX tires (optional on unblown Fuegos, standard on the Turbo) don't help the vehicle handling as much as you might expect, either. With a section width 20mm narrower than the base car's standard tire, the TRXs limit the car's handling at least as much as the overly soft springing. And while it may be ar-

# ROAD TEST DATA



## Volkswagen Scirocco

### ▣ SPECIFICATIONS

#### GENERAL

Vehicle manufacturer	Volkswagenwerk AG, Wolfsburg, West Germany
Vehicle importer	Volkswagen of America Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey
Body type	4-pass., 3-door hatchback sport coupe
Drive system	Transverse front engine, front drive
Base price	\$10,150
Major options on test car	A/C, rear window wiper/washer, metallic paint
Price as tested	\$11,090

#### ENGINE

Type	Inline four, liquid cooled, cast iron block, aluminum head
Displacement	105 cu in. (1715 cc)
Bore & stroke	3.13 x 3.40 in. (79.5 x 86.4 mm)
Compression ratio	8.2:1
Induction system	Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection
Valvetrain	SOHC
Crankshaft	Cast, 5 main bearings
Maximum engine speed	7000 rpm
Maximum power (SAE net)	74 at 5000 rpm
Maximum torque (SAE net)	90 lb-ft at 3000 rpm
Emission control	Three-way catalyst, oxygen sensor, EGR, air injection
Recommended fuel	87 RON unleaded

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-speed manual
Transmission ratios (1st)	3.45:1
(2nd)	1.94:1
(3rd)	1.29:1
(4th)	0.91:1
(5th)	0.71:1
Axle ratio	3.89:1
Final drive ratio	2.76:1

#### CAPACITIES

Crankcase	4.7 qts
Cooling system	4.9 qts
Fuel tank	10.5 gals
Luggage	12.18 cu ft

#### SUSPENSION

Front	MacPherson struts, coil springs, telescopic shocks
Rear	Interconnected trailing arms, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar

#### STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion
Ratio	20.8:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.9
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	31.2 ft

#### BRAKES

Front	9.4-in. discs, power assist
Rear	7.1-in. drums
Swept area	238.5 sq in.

#### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	13 x 5.5 in.
Wheel type	Cast aluminum
Tire size	175/70SR13
Tire manufacturer & model	Michelin XZX 70
Tire construction	Steel-belted radial

#### DIMENSIONS

Curb weight	2185 lb
Weight distribution (%)	F/R 64/36
Wheelbase	94.5 in.
Overall length	165.7 in.
Overall width	64.0 in.
Overall height	51.4 in.
Track, F/R	54.7/53.5 in.
Minimum ground clearance	4.3 in.

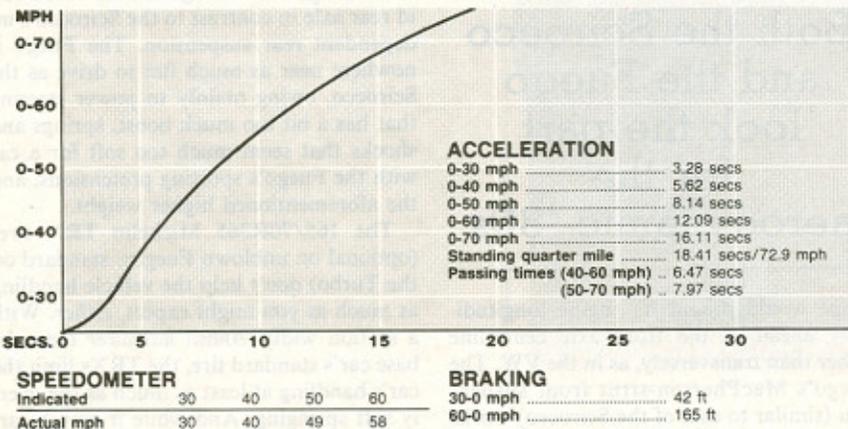
#### CALCULATED DATA

Power-to-weight ratio	29.5 lb/hp
Brake swept area to weight ratio	198 sq in./ton
Drag coefficient	0.39

#### FUEL ECONOMY (mpg)

EPA rating	28/41
Test average	34.1

### ▣ TEST RESULTS



## Fuego vs. Scirocco

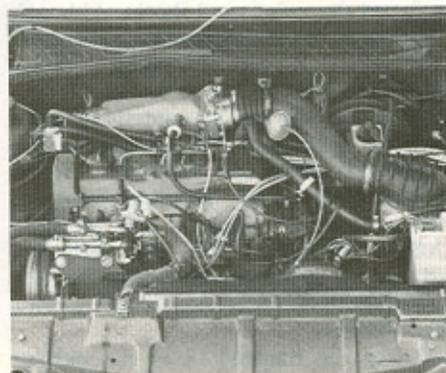
guable that the suspension is acceptable on the base Fuego, the Turbo needs to offer the enthusiast a suspension closer to that fitted to the European Fuego GTX. With firmer springing, revalved shock absorbers, and the available 185/65HR14 Goodyear NCT tires, the GTX will drive circles around the Scirocco. Maybe next year.

Both the Scirocco and the Fuego look the part for the aerodynamic '80s. The Volkswagen, in the transformation from Giugiaro-clean to aerodynamically pure, has turned Japanese in the eyes of many observers. The rounded rear quarters and high-mounted taillamp clusters are more than slightly reminiscent of an early Honda Accord. The thick, untrimmed B-pillar looks like it came straight off a Datsun 310. The Fuego, on the other hand looks as French as a croissant. The general shape of the Renault coupe is an eye-catcher. The

## Clutter is one word used in conjunction

only negative comments from our staff concerned the black louver panel that runs along the car's flanks and the plethora of tape stripes that clutter the Turbo.

Clutter is one word that could never be used in conjunction with the Scirocco's interior. The whole environment is the embodiment of Teutonic efficiency. Aside from a piece or two of plastic trim, there is nothing in the interior that doesn't belong, something you notice immediately. There is something else that commands your attention almost as quickly—the typically firm German seating. The front seats are not unlike Recaros, with generous thigh support and thick side bolsters to keep you in your place when the going gets fast. The back-seat passengers will find the accommodations cramped, although noticeably better than previous Sciroccos. The rear seat is molded to look like buck-ets. This *trompe l'oeil* accomplishes something other than merely making the back-



Scirocco

## vs. Fuego Turbo

seat occupants feel sporty. Since the bottom bolsters are scooped out, the effective head room is improved—and in the Scirocco, every little bit helps. The seating surfaces in the VW are upholstered in a subdued plaid (gray and beige in our test car) that doesn't quite seem to measure up to the rest of the interior.

The instrument panel, on the other hand, is strongly reminiscent of another German car that goes by the number 928. The pod that contains the speedo, tach, fuel, and water temperature gauges has the soft, rounded look of the instrument pod of the V-8 Porsche. The similarity extends to the lettering style of the instrument faces themselves. Whether it was deliberate or accidental, we're sure of one thing—it works. The gauges in this primary cluster are a breeze to read even at a glance, and help spiff-up the otherwise sedate interior.

## that could never be with the Scirocco

The Fuego is as French inside as the Scirocco is German, which is to say soft and comfortable versus firm and controlled. A checked velour fabric covers the facing surfaces of the Renault's seats. The material, reminiscent of the Audi 5000 Turbo, helps hold front-seat occupants in place when driving with enthusiasm. It's a good thing too, because the backrest is deeply sculptured, and the bottom bolsters of the front seats rely heavily on gravity alone to hold you in place. With leather upholstery (optional on the Turbo), the front seats treat the occupants like riders on a Wham-O Slip-And-Slide when lateral g's begin to build. Order the cloth. Those relegated to the back seat will find the Fuego much roomier than the Scirocco in every way, particularly in head room.

The Fuego's instrumentation isn't nearly as visually striking as the Scirocco's, but it does gather high marks for legibility. The main cluster contains the same instruments



Scirocco



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IN MOORE COUNTY, you can buy everything from Tennessee hams to Tennessee hounds. But never Tennessee Whiskey.

Surprisingly, the county where we make Jack Daniel's is dry. So even if we wanted to sell our whiskey here, the sheriff wouldn't go along. Still, we think you'll enjoy a tour through our distillery and a stroll through our town. Just drop in anytime. You'll learn a lot about good whiskey. And you might latch on to a pretty fair dog.



CHARCOAL  
MELLOWED

DROP

BY DROP

Tennessee Whiskey • 90 Proof • Distilled and Bottled by Jack Daniel Distillery  
Lem Motlow, Prop., Inc., Route 1, Lynchburg (Pop. 361), Tennessee 37352

Placed in the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Government.

## Fuego vs. Scirocco

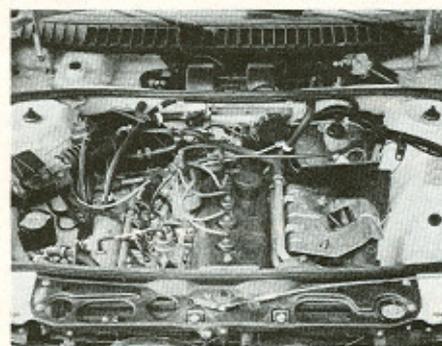
as the VW, plus an oil level gauge. Unlike the Scirocco, the Renault's instrumentation is backlit making it easier on the eyes at night. The Fuego's leather-rimmed, 4-spoke steering wheel is much more substantial than the soft plastic affair in the VW. In addition, the Renault is fitted with an adjustable steering column, while the Scirocco offers no similar feature. Finally, since it concerns only the Turbo, the manifold boost gauge is mounted absurdly low on the center console (just barely above the shifter, next to the digital clock), apparently for the convenience of those drivers who wear their watches on their ankles.

The fuel economy of both cars is almost identical, but the Fuego offers the buyer substantially more room than the VW. And the Fuego's entry price is considerably less than the Scirocco. Even equipped as our test cars were, the normally aspirated Fuego undercut the Scirocco by \$1150.

When compared by price, the Fuego Turbo is the Scirocco's logical competitor.

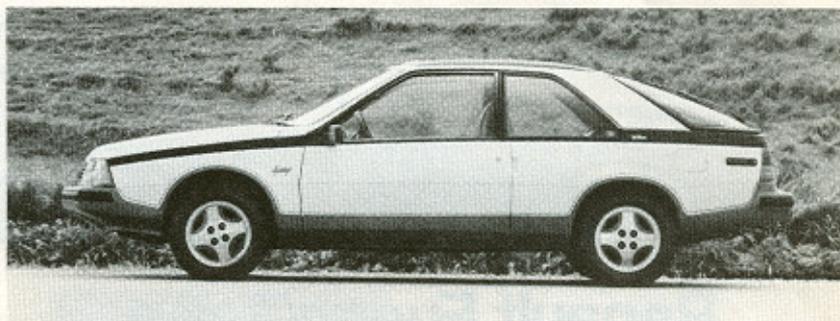


Due to its overly soft suspension, the Fuego isn't as much fun to drive as the VW.



Fuego

## ROAD TEST DATA



## Renault Fuego

### ▣ SPECIFICATIONS

#### GENERAL

Vehicle manufacturer	Régie Nationale Des Usines Renault, Boulogne Billancourt, France
Vehicle importer	American Motors Corporation, Southfield, Michigan
Body type	4-pass., 3-door hatchback sport coupe
Drive system	Front engine, front drive
Base price	\$8495
Major options on test car	A/C, electric sunroof, aluminum wheels with Michelin TRX tires
Price as tested	\$9940

#### ENGINE

Type	In-line four, liquid cooled, cast aluminum block with cast iron cylinder liners, aluminum head
Displacement	100 cu in. (1647 cc)
Bore & stroke	3.11 x 3.31 in. (79 x 84 mm)
Compression ratio	8.6:1
Induction system	Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection
Valvetrain	OHV
Crankshaft	Cast, 5 main bearings
Maximum engine speed	6000 rpm
Maximum power (SAE net)	82 at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque (SAE net)	86 lb-ft at 2500 rpm
Emission control	Three-way catalyst, oxygen sensor, EGR
Recommended fuel	87 RON, unleaded

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-speed manual
Transmission ratios (1st)	3.82:1
(2nd)	2.18:1
(3rd)	1.41:1
(4th)	1.03:1
(5th)	0.86:1
Axle ratio	4.12:1
Final drive ratio	3.54:1

#### CAPACITIES

Crankcase	5.2 qts
Cooling system	7.5 qts
Fuel tank	14.8 gals
Luggage	13.8 cu ft

#### SUSPENSION

Front	MacPherson struts, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear	Rigid axle, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar

#### STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion, power assist
Ratio	16.3:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	2.8
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	35.7 ft

#### BRAKES

Front	9.37-in. internally ventilated discs, power assist
Rear	9.00-in. drums
Swept area	255 sq in.

#### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	365 x 140 mm
Wheel type	Cast aluminum, TR type
Tire size	P165/70HR365
Tire manufacturer & model	Michelin TRX
Tire construction	Steel-belted radial

#### DIMENSIONS

Curb weight	2379 lb
Weight distribution (%)	F/R 59/41
Wheelbase	96.1 in.
Overall length	176.8 in.
Overall width	66.6 in.
Overall height	50.5 in.
Track, F/R	56.4/53.0 in.
Minimum ground clearance	5.5 in.

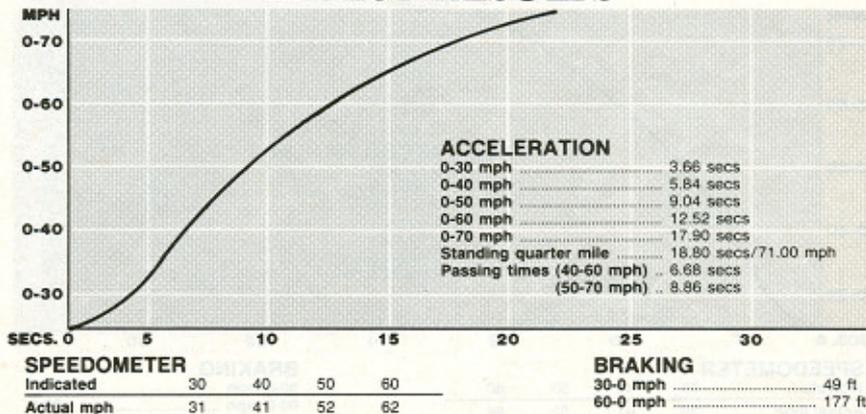
#### CALCULATED DATA

Power-to-weight ratio	29.0 lb/hp
Brake swept area to weight ratio	214.38 sq in./ton
Drag coefficient	0.35

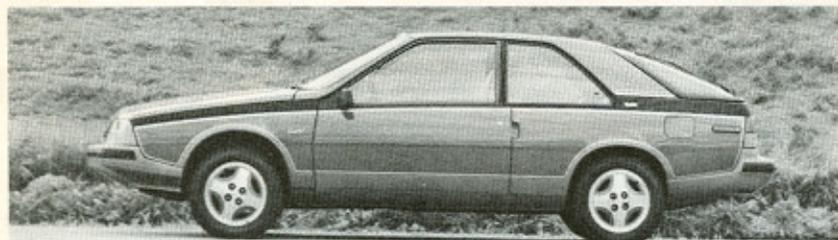
#### FUEL ECONOMY (MPG)

EPA rating	26/37
Test average	33.2

### ▣ TEST RESULTS



# ROAD TEST DATA



## Renault Fuego Turbo

### ▣ SPECIFICATIONS

#### GENERAL

Vehicle manufacturer	Régie Nationale des Usines Renault, Boulogne Billancourt, France
Vehicle importer	American Motors Corporation, Southfield, Michigan
Body type	4-pass., 3-door hatchback sport coupe
Drive system	Front engine, front drive
Base price	\$8495
Major options on test car	Turbocharged engine, A/C, Touring Interior package, aluminum wheels with Michelin TRX tires, Convenience group, Visibility group, AM/FM/cassette radio
Price as tested	\$11,773

#### ENGINE

Type	Inline four, liquid cooled, cast aluminum block with cast iron cylinder liners, aluminum head
Displacement	95.5 cu in. (1565 cc)
Bore & stroke	3.03 x 3.31 in. (77 x 84 mm)
Compression ratio	8.0:1
Induction system	Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection, Garrett AiResearch T03 turbocharger, air-to-air intercooler
Valvetrain	OHV
Crankshaft	Cast, 5 main bearings
Maximum engine speed	6000 rpm
Maximum power (SAE net)	107 at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque (SAE net)	120 lb-ft at 2500 rpm
Emission control	Three-way catalyst, oxygen sensor, EGR
Recommended fuel	94 RON, unleaded

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-speed manual
Transmission ratios (1st)	3.82:1
(2nd)	2.18:1
(3rd)	1.41:1
(4th)	1.03:1
(5th)	0.86:1
Axle ratio	3.78:1
Final drive ratio	3.25:1

#### CAPACITIES

Crankcase	4.2 qts
Cooling system	7.5 qts
Fuel tank	14.8 gals
Luggage	13.8 cu ft

#### SUSPENSION

Front	MacPherson struts, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear	Rigid axle, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar

#### STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion, power assist
Ratio	24.5:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	2.8
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	35.7 ft

#### BRAKES

Front	9.37-in. internally ventilated discs, power assist
Rear	9.00-in. drums
Sweep area	255 sq in.

#### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	365 x 140 mm
Wheel type	Cast aluminum, TR type
Tire size	P165/70HR365
Tire manufacturer & model	Michelin TRX
Tire construction	Steel-belted radial

#### DIMENSIONS

Curb weight	2482 lb
Weight distribution (%)	F/R 61/39
Wheelbase	96.1 in.
Overall length	176.8 in.
Overall width	66.6 in.
Overall height	50.5 in.
Track, F/R	56.4/53.0 in.
Minimum ground clearance	5.5 in.

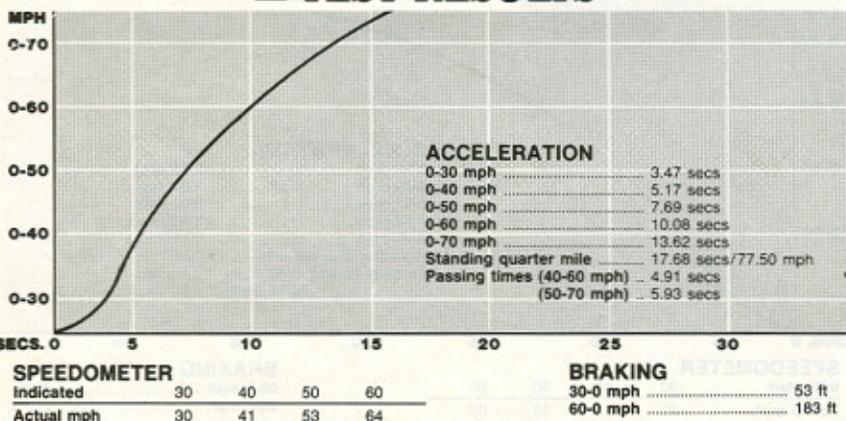
#### CALCULATED DATA

Power-to-weight ratio	23.2 lb/hp
Brake swept area to weight ratio	205.50 sq in/ton
Drag coefficient	0.35

#### FUEL ECONOMY (MPG)

EPA Rating	26/39
Test average	31.7

### ▣ TEST RESULTS



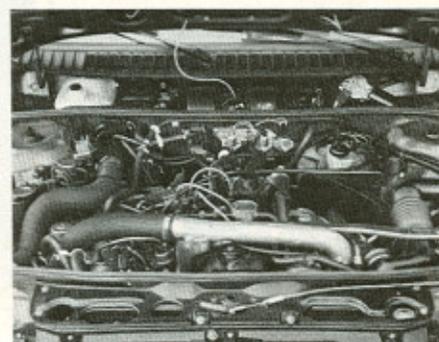
## Fuego vs. Scirocco

The blown Renault was \$683 more than the Scirocco as tested. A base model Turbo against the base VW cuts the price differential to a bit over \$550, favoring the Scirocco. But the base Fuego Turbo includes power steering and air conditioning, both extra-cost options on the Scirocco. When the VW is optioned up to the level of the base Renault Turbo, the Fuego is actually \$291 less.

Whether or not the Fuego's aggressive pricing will work in the U.S. market is anybody's guess, but the situation looks promising. The Scirocco has carved itself a nice niche in the sporty coupe market segment, and the Fuego is the first car to seriously bid for a piece of the Scirocco's territory. And it's doing it at a lower price. The next year or so will prove whether the coupe buyer will select the Fuego's outright acceleration and price advantage or the Scirocco's kick-in-the-pants, fun-to-drive handling and its image of Black Forest quality.



The Fuego boasts a lower drag figure than the Scirocco without add-on spoilers



Fuego Turbo