



# THE NEW VOLKSWAGEN

*A more sporty Scirocco surfaces*

BY PAUL FRÈRE



WHEN IT WAS announced in 1974, the Scirocco was an important car, more important than the comparative exclusivity of a 2+2 coupe might have suggested: It was the forerunner of the Golf (Rabbit), altered only by its sleek Giugiaro-designed body made by Karmann in Osnabrück. It was marketed in advance of the Golf, so that production could be smooth-running and experience in after-sales service could be gained before the Golf was placed on the market. Remember, this was a vitally important car for Volkswagen at the time.

Meanwhile 510,000 Sciroccos have been built, and the time has come for a change. As Volkswagen concentrates on making cars more fuel efficient, it would be illogical for the most sporting model of the range to have the worst drag coefficient. The makers also wanted to accommodate the popular request for more head room and luggage space. The new car takes care of these requirements with a length increase of 6.5 in. and no change in either height or width. The increase in head room and the more relevant increase in elbow room have been achieved by appropriate changes to the interior trim. Nearly two-thirds of the increased length, now 159.9 in., benefits the luggage compartment, the remainder going into a longer nose for better aerodynamics and crashworthiness.

The drag coefficient has been lowered by 10 percent from 0.42 to 0.38—good, not exceptional—but, thanks to the car's

small frontal area, the overall drag is very low and accounts for the maximum speed of 118 mph claimed for the 110 bhp (DIN) fuel injected model. Recessed rain gutters and a large rear spoiler set across the hatchback window (which extends far down for good outward vision) are part of the benefits. The spoiler is responsible for a 60-percent reduction of rear-end lift compared with the previous model, accounting for noticeably improved stability in fast cornering. The slot that remains between the spoiler and the rear window directs rapid airflow over the glass surface that efficiently keeps the window clean without a wiper.

In contrast with the original Scirocco, the new model took shape in VW's own styling department and wind tunnel, making it easier for the stylists and aerodynamicists to come to terms with one another. An additional advantage of the new model is a much improved ventilating system with outlets on the sides and in the center of the dash, the center ones for cold air only and the side ones for warm or cold air. In all cases, airflow can be activated by the 3-speed blower.

Noise insulation has been carefully revised incorporating more soundproofing material. An inevitable result of the longer body, improved trim and better sound insulation is a 75-lb increase in weight; part of this, 40 lb, is in the body, 18 lb in the interior trim (mainly the recessed door panels) and 13 lb in soundproofing. The larger glass areas, however, have not resulted in weight increase; this

was accomplished by the use of thinner, and more expensive, glass. Curb weights range from 1830 lb for the 1.3-liter model (which uses a small block, cross-flow VW engine) to 1975 lb for the fuel injected 1.6-liter. Volkswagen says that performance and fuel consumption have not suffered because the increase in weight is more than compensated for by the lower drag. This is confirmed by performance figures I obtained as well as by official EEC fuel-consumption figures: all better than for equivalent previous models.

The floor pan, the running gear and the various engine options are carried over from the corresponding previous models except for a few details, such as the extension of the fixed front-brake calipers and rear brake-pressure limiter to the entire range. They were previously used on top-range models only. As before, the fuel injected 1.6-liter models run on 13 x 5½-in. (rather than 13 x 5-in.) rims and on tires of HR rating; they have ventilated front discs, front and rear anti-roll bars and stiffer damper rates, providing more sporting handling.

For the German market, four different engines are available: the basic 1.3-liter small block giving 60 bhp (DIN); the 1.5-liter big block giving 70 bhp (DIN); the carbureted 1.6, which has the same 79.5-mm bore as the 1.5 but a longer (80.0-mm) stroke, putting out 85 bhp (DIN); and the K-Jetronic injected 1.6-liter producing 110 bhp (DIN). Only the last with a 9.5:1 compression ratio requires premium grade (98-RON) fuel. The others →

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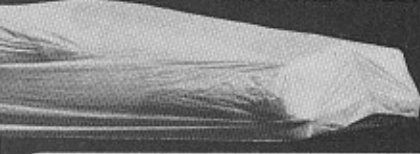
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have 8.2:1 ratios and use cheaper fuel.

As before, the fuel injected model comes with a close-ratio 5-speed gearbox, while a 4-speed is the standard offering for the other models. The 70- and 85-bhp versions may, however, be purchased with the VW 3-speed automatic or—and this is new—with the so-called 4 + E gearbox, in which the four lower ratios are identical with those of the 4-speed box and E is a very long-legged economy 5th ("Letter from Europe," June 1981).

As before, some markets will not have the choice of all the engines. Great Britain, for instance, will not import the 60- and 70-bhp models, while the U.S. and Japan will get a detoxed 1.7-liter K-Jetronic engine that produces 85 bhp.

### Driving Impressions

I BORROWED a GLi fuel injected model for a 1200-mile journey across France, Italy and Germany that included driving in the Alps, on secondary roads and on motorways. The outstanding impressions are those of agility, safety and, surprisingly, comfort and quietness. The engine is remarkably quiet (especially for a 4-cylinder) as it has virtually no noticeable resonance period, which explains why the exhaust, which isn't masked by wind noise either, can be heard in the middle ranges more than it should. The ability of the little car to cruise without apparent stress and with the radio audible at speeds beyond 100 mph is astonishing. The engine pulls strongly from about 2500 rpm and would apparently rev indefinitely if the ignition cutout did not intervene at 6900 rpm to preserve it.

Slight negative front-wheel camber provides good steering response and keeps understeer at a minimum. The car is insensitive to lifting off in mid-corner; in fact, I would prefer it to tighten its line slightly in this instance in case the circumstances require it. Comfort is also surprisingly good for such a light, well handling car, enhanced by excellent front seats that provide first-class lateral support during fast cornering. In fact, on some roads I felt the car could do with more damping. The brakes too are fully up to their task, even when hurtling down Alpine passes rally style.

There are two details, however, that I dislike: One is the single windshield wiper that omits a large area at the bottom of the windshield on the left-hand side. The wiper axis is offset to the left, and the asymmetrical field wiped is supposedly specially adapted to the left-hand drive, but I think the drivers of right-hand-drive cars will be better off—unless Volkswagen inverts the system for them! The lights are the other disappointment: My rating ranges from mediocre for the low beam to abominable for the high beam even though they are quartz-halogen. The different twin head-

lights fitted to the GT and GTi versions aren't any better.

These faults, however, are outweighed by another endearing aspect of this little car: its astonishing fuel economy, at least related to its performance. As you may have guessed, the Scirocco was driven as fast as it would go most of the time. On one occasion, it outdistanced a Mercedes-Benz 280SE (of the now-superseded series) in an 80-mile-long duel. With this in mind, the fuel consumption of 19.6 mpg (U.S.) is remarkable, and by keeping the speed down to 80-85 mph 23 mpg could easily be obtained. Unfortunately, the range provided by the 10 gal. tank is on the short side.

From the performance figures listed here, it is apparent that the fuel injected Scirocco is not only a delightful little car but also probably the quickest production 1.6-liter available anywhere in the world, and one that provides the best performance/economy and the best performance/price ratio.

Time to speed, sec:

0-60 mph	8.9
0-70 mph	11.2
0-80 mph	14.7
0-90 mph	19.3
0-100 mph	26.2

Time to distance, sec:

0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	16.3
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Maximum speed: 116 mph

After returning the GLi, I sampled an 85-bhp model in GT trim for a shorter drive. The GT differs from the GL in a few areas only, including front seats adjustable for height, twin headlights instead of single H4 plus fog lights and a few other external details. The ride height is slightly higher in the 85-bhp and lower powered models than in the injection models. There are different dampers, the roll control is softer and the rims are ½ in. narrower.

Though not as fast as the 110-bhp models, the 85 bhp is still a potent performer. VW claims 0-100 km/h (0-62 mph) in 11.8 sec and a maximum speed of 174 km/h (108 mph). This is probably an honest estimate as, in the case of the GLi, I actually bettered the manufacturer's figure for 0-100 km/h by clocking 9.5 sec. My test car had the 4 + E gearbox, and though 5th is slower than 4th, it provides relaxed motorway cruising (though with little punch left) in the 75-95 mph range, the engine turning over at a mere 4000 rpm at 150 km/h (93 mph). On good roads, there is little difference between the ride provided by the normal Scirocco and that of the more sporting 110-bhp model. But on rough surfaces, the longer bump travel and the softer roll control show up to advantage. What is gained here is lost in handling crispness, but the handling is still good and understeer is reduced to the point that the car feels neutral in most circumstances. 