



Volkswagen Scirocco

One good turn deserves another.

• Okay, all you antisocial hotshoes, leadfoots, boy racers, girl racers, and commie-pinko-deviate car enthusiasts. You have no doubt been wondering just how VW was going to follow an act like the lovable little rat-racer Scirocco. Well, the answer is in VW dealerships now, and we're happy to tell you that it's still your kind of car.

This is good news indeed, because it would have been easy for Volkswagen to fall short trying to come up with a worthy successor. The original Scirocco was one of those rare cars that are far greater than the sum of their parts—in this case, mostly Rabbit parts. It was al-

ways ready and eager to try for tickets if you were.

But the Scirocco's special appeal went much deeper than its uncanny ability to put a smile on your face after a hard day at the office. Underneath the stunning Giugiaro-designed flying-doorstop bodywork it was almost as utilitarian as a lowly econobox. Need some extra room? The vestigial rear seat could handle the kids, or even a couple of masochistic adults—for short trips. Helping a friend move? The yawning hatchback could almost swallow a refrigerator. As for economy and reliability, the Scirocco's guts were straight from a

Rabbit. How much more responsible could you ask a sporting car to be?

Trying to improve on that formula left the determined corps of VW engineers breathing heavily. It's a credit to the success of the original design that the new car is less changed than a casual first glance would lead you to believe. That, in fact, is the 1982 Scirocco's story: it doesn't stray far from the original in either its basic design or its mechanical makeup.

Volkswagen makes no bones about the fact that a lot of the old Scirocco lives under the skin of the new car. The latest rendition shares its 74-hp, 1.7-

liter, fuel-injected four-cylinder engine and five-speed manual gearbox with last year's car—and this year's Rabbit, for that matter—and the powertrain is again canted back toward the firewall.

Most of the older car's floorpan, its 94.5-inch wheelbase, its MacPherson-strut front suspension, its independent-trailing-arm rear suspension, and its rack-and-pinion steering are recycled as well. The only major change to the chassis is the addition of a pair of small sheetmetal extensions, which are welded to the nose and tail of the floorpan so that it can mate with a body that's ten inches longer than before.

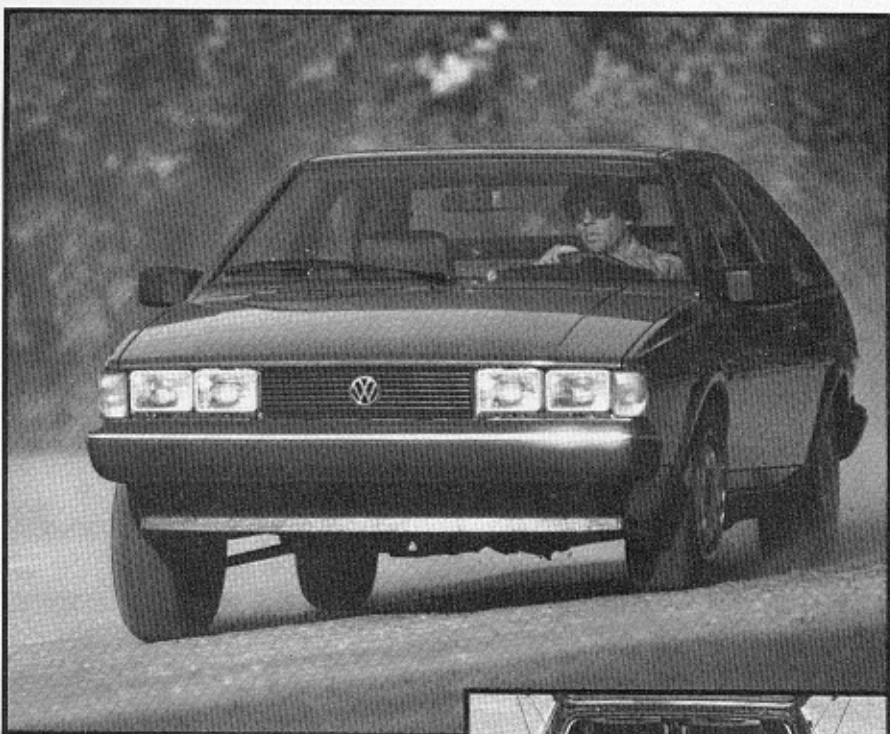
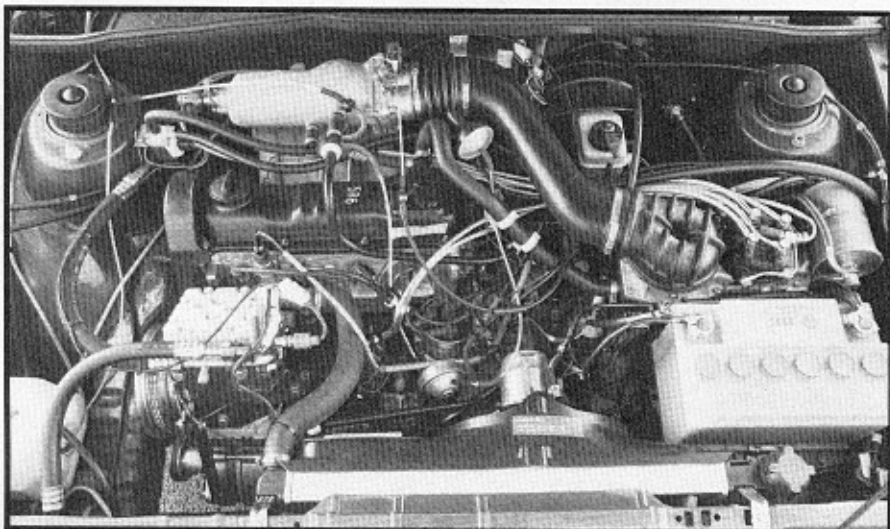
Running counter to today's downsizing trend was the most convenient way for VW to attend to two of the Scirocco's sore points: a smallish trunk (with the seat up) and a low roofline that squeezed headroom to a bare minimum. Though the car's overall height is virtually the same as before, there's now almost four inches more noggin room up front, about seven inches more headroom for rear-seat riders, and 28 percent more luggage space.

Unfortunately, the added room comes with a 100-pound weight penalty. What this says is that the Scirocco was already pretty much at the space-efficiency limit. And even though it's porkier now, at 2160 pounds it's far from heavy for an automobile of its size.

As to the success of the restyling job, the jury is still out. Volkswagen chose to handle the redesign itself rather than farm it out to the masterful Giugiaro and his minions at Italdesign. Around these parts we feel the results are a mixed bag—sporty and aggressive, to be sure, but just not the knockout the original was.

By any measure, however, the body does its job better than before. Thanks to a number of changes dictated by VW's wind tunnel, the new Scirocco bores through the air with a drag coefficient of 0.39—not quite as slippery as the new Camaro and Firebird or the Porsche 924 Turbo, but still 9 percent better than the car it replaces.

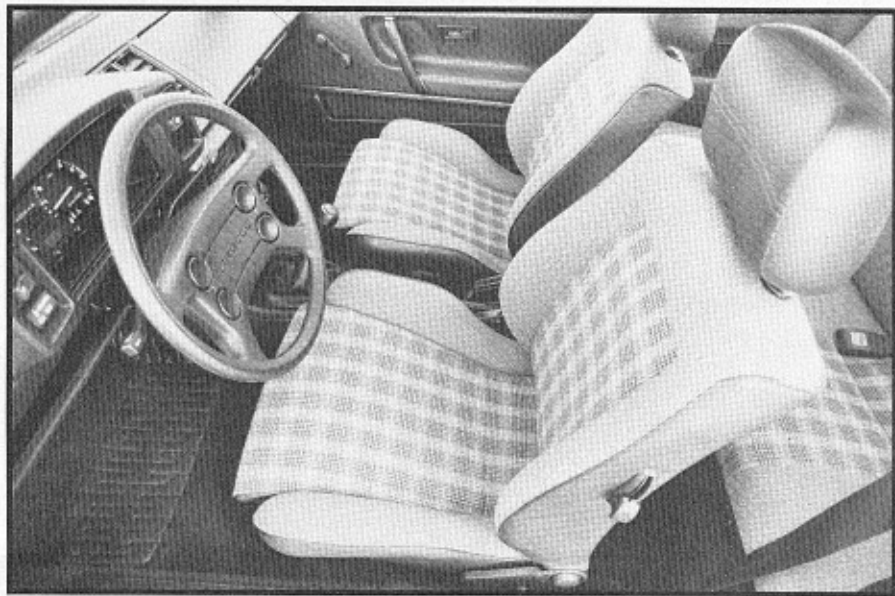
To get there from here, the windshield—one of the most critical components in the drag equation—was raked back a few degrees farther than before. The rear of the roof tapers more gradually for the same reason. The rain gutters were deleted. An integral front air dam smooths airflow under the nose and reduces front-end lift by 14 percent. The soft rear spoiler reduces tur-



bulence at the tail and at the same time cuts rear-end lift by a whopping 55 percent. (Lying across the rear window as it does, it creates one of the oddest rear-view-mirror scapes anywhere.) Even the shape of the side mirrors was carefully honed to minimize drag.

Like most manufacturers, VW used the wind tunnel for things other than making sure its car cleaves the air as cleanly as possible. If the Scirocco's hatch fit appears to be off, that's because it was purposely recessed so that water is swept off the roof into a drain under the leading edge of the hatch. The forward edges of the door frames likewise tuck slightly inboard of the windshield pillars, a move VW says reduces wind noise.





We had an opportunity to test the old and new aerodynamics in the simplest, most effective lab setting: a wheel-to-wheel open-road drag race between the 1982 and 1981 cars. Off the line the lighter 1981 car pulled out a clear lead of half a car-length and held on to it to about 60 mph. But by the time the speedo needle had swept into the Joan Claybrook-mandated never-never land of 85 mph, the new car was ahead and pulling slowly away. It was a graphic demonstration Mr. Wizard would have been proud of.

Not only the outside of the Scirocco works better now. The new version packs enough headroom up front so that those of the extra-long persuasion—like our own David E. Davis, Jr.—will be able to drive with their favorite hats on. The rear seat, despite the quantum leap in air space, is still relegated to munchkins only.

Once you've buckled in, you'll note that the driving environment has been redesigned every bit as thoroughly as the sheetmetal. About the only resemblance to the older model is the shape

of the deeply contoured front buckets, which are covered in comfortable plaid cloth. You'll then confront a soft, whimsical, four-spoke steering wheel with four silver-dollar-sized horn buttons and a new and very handsome instrument panel, which blends smoothly into the modernistic, heavily sculptured door panels.

You'll also notice that the base Scirocco's interior is free from doodads, geegaws, and also much of the comfort and convenience gear that is standard in Japanese cars of this price. The Scirocco is still the kind of purposeful, business-like car that gives you what you need to get the job done, and little else. The seat bottoms adjust for rake and the backrests recline, but that's about it for special features. If you want to open the fuel-filler door, pop the rear hatch, or put up the antenna, you're just going to have to get out and do it yourself. Or shell out for the optional GL luxury package, which can alleviate some of this manual labor.

Not to worry. The Scirocco still exudes a special tingle that serious drivers

will feel in their bones. The engine hums excitedly from the other side of the firewall and pulls happily to six grand and beyond without thrashing. All the controls used for going, stopping, turning, and shifting gears have a linear, natural feel that makes the Scirocco seem like an old friend inside of the first mile.

Oddly enough, for all its familiarity, the Scirocco's character has shifted subtly this year, the delicate balance of its flavoring so slightly different that you might not notice unless you flogged the old and new down a country road nose-to-tail the way we did. This brief excursion to the edge of the Scirocco's performance envelope illustrated just how much a car's personality hinges on the small things.

The new car, for example, doesn't crash through to the bump stops on rough roads as often—which is to say, hardly ever. Its steering effort is just a bit heavier now, and the response to steering inputs is a bit less crisp. Wind noise is significantly down. All this plus the illusion of greater width that you get from behind the wheel—there's actually only one-tenth of an inch of difference—seems to insulate you more while making the Scirocco seem less flingable. On the other hand, it feels that much more refined now, more competent, and, well, grown up—like a BMW.

If the new car doesn't feel quite as racy as the old, it still drives better than almost any Honda, Toyota, or Mazda. A German suspension engineer would rather sell his family than sacrifice any road feel for a pillow-soft ride, so you feel the tar strips and blemishes in the tarmac. What you get in return is reassuring response. Where you lead, the Scirocco follows, shrugging off bumps and lumps in the middle of corners that would give you white knuckles in a lot of other cars.

The chassis is so rock-steady, in fact, that it feels almost underpowered. A nice round 20 hp, we reckon, would make it sparkle even brighter. (Rumor has it that VW has a two-liter engine of 95 hp under consideration.) For now, though, we'd settle for a cooling fan that isn't as loud as the engine itself.

The new car won't let you down when you point it down the Interstate on your next vacation, either. Thanks in part to the good aerodynamic tuning, wind noise is admirably low, and the Scirocco arrows along at top speed almost as unruffled as it is at the double-nickel

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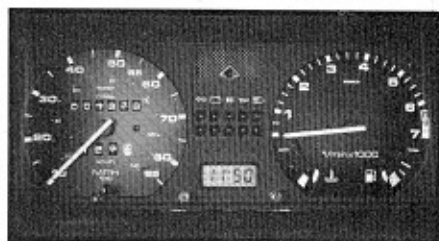
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SCIROCCO



—which means it tracks down the lane like a slot car.

For those times when traffic is thick, VW has given us an ingenious new fuel-saving gadget to hold our attention: the E Light. As you may know, this clever electronic device keeps track of both throttle position and engine rpm, its sole purpose being to tell you that you can obtain equivalent acceleration and better fuel economy by shifting to the next-highest gear. In a 2000-car study monitored by the EPA, drivers found that they spent a lot of time watching the E Light arrow. In fact, the results were strong enough to convince the case-hardened federal agency to approve this operator-dependent system—the first time it's made such an exception—and to add its potential benefits to the EPA mileage sticker. (This alone bumps the Scirocco's rating from 25 to 28 mpg.) As a result all 1982 manual-transmission Vee-Dubs will be equipped with the E Light.

Our experience with it couldn't have been more positive. In most cases, it acted as a simple reminder that we were a gear or maybe two too low in any given cruising situation. The E Light doesn't flash in a situation where you wouldn't want to upshift early—for instance, when you're accelerating hard to pass, when you're already in top gear, or when you're braking. And if you know something about the conditions that the E Light doesn't—for example, that traffic is about to open up—you can just ignore it.

Having a fuel-economy device in a hard-charging supercoupe might at first appear incongruous, but it seems wholly appropriate in the Scirocco. The Scirocco, after all, is the kind of car in which efficiency is of prime importance—an integral part of its functionalist persona.

If all of this doesn't exactly amount to prodigious progress—well, who ever said it *had* to? Leave the masses to their plain-vanilla sedans. The good news is that the new Scirocco is still an automobile a full-fledged leadfoot-weirdo-gonzo car nut can love. We need more like it.

—Rich Ceppos

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COUNTERPOINT

• At first seating in this Scirocco, I was convinced that I liked the old one better, just as I was convinced by the 1970½ Camaro that the chunky 1970 version was more fun and by the Ferrari BB that the Daytona was a bigger kick. Sophistication is universally acclaimed in family haulers and almost always regarded warily in sporting cars, at least by me. Sophistication never makes me giggle.

This new Scirocco is obviously more sophisticated; the front suspension doesn't crash against its stops, it's quieter, has more headroom in back, etc. It just generally feels like a grown-up car.

But despite the old car's shortcomings, it was triple-distilled fun: lean where the new one is fat, zany where the replacement is merely poised.

Merely poised? About twice as poised actually, and such sophistication has a way of ingratiating itself over time. I can't imagine how I ever doubted the appeal of the second-generation Camaro, and a year from now I'm sure I'll see the wisdom of the new Scirocco. But in the meantime, I wouldn't mind one more fling in the old one. —Patrick Bedard

Reservations work really well for hotels, airplanes, and dinners. Unfortunately, I've got some about the new Scirocco.

It is beautifully finished, but bland. Why didn't Volkswagen go back to Giugiaro? The Germans could have had the design that's become the Isuzu Piazza, or something, instead of a mixture of Toyota and Honda around a grosser B-pillar.

Over the road, Jettas are nicer. Quieter, too, without the Scirocco's wailing of engine and howling of Michelins. The steering is heavier now, and slightly rubbery,

lacking that light-footed quickness of yore. Torque steer at low speed and floatiness at high speed have replaced it.

The sport seats are very good (cushy, too), but the dash vents are pug-ugly.

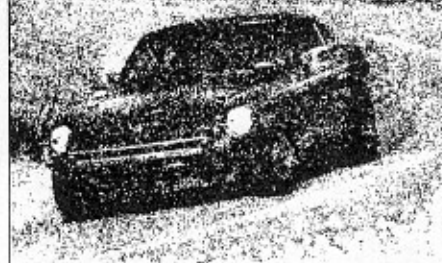
The Scirocco needs the full GTI revelation, Europe's 110-horsepower, kick-ass motor and chassis. With today's emissions technology, it can be done. We in America are looked on by too many European manufacturers as second-class citizens. *Real* performance is too good for us. Maybe that's why VW is in trouble trying to sell Rabbits that have been turned into little Oldsmobiles. —Larry Griffin

A Giugiaro original is a tough act to follow, but Volkswagen hasn't done such a bad job with the new Scirocco. The Wolfsburg wind tunnel was the stylists' chief tool, and it's certainly fitting that a car named for a breeze should slip through same with a minimum of effort.

The new wind-whittled Scirocco now sports a high, Porsche 924-style wrap-around rear end, and the nose is pinched down tightly over beady little headlamps to create a rather saurian countenance (like, man, it looks like a lizard). I like it.

The Scirocco's new skin is only icing on the cake. This car is simply a blast to drive. The engine gives everything it's got when asked (actually, a little more would be nice), and the tires stick like crazy in tense situations that would prove disastrous in a BMW 320i. My only complaint is the godawful foghorn of a racket that the electric fan makes when it kicks on, which seems to be about every five minutes around town. The logical solution is to keep the Scirocco in the wind, where it was meant to be. —Jean Lindamood

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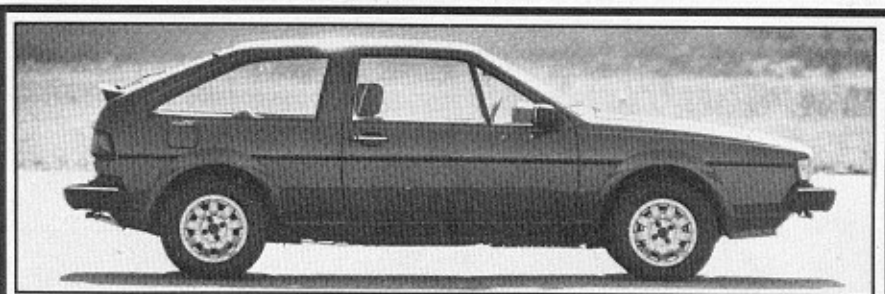
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*December, 1979 ABC

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SCIROCCO



Vehicle type: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 3-door sedan

Price as tested: \$11,090

Options on test car: base Volkswagen Scirocco, \$10,150; air conditioning, \$690; metallic paint, \$125; rear-window wiper-washer, \$125.

Sound system: Volkswagen AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette, 4 speakers

ENGINE

Type 4-in-line, iron block and aluminum head
Bore x stroke 3.13 x 3.40 in, 79.5 x 86.4mm
Displacement 105 cu in, 1716cc
Compression ratio 8.2:1
Fuel system Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection
Emissions controls 3-way catalytic converter, feedback fuel-air-ratio control
Valve gear belt-driven single overhead cam
Power (SAE net) 74 bhp @ 5000 rpm
Torque (SAE net) 90 lbs-ft @ 3000 rpm
Redline 6700 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission 5-speed
Final-drive ratio 3.89:1
Gear Ratio Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed
I 3.45 4.9 33 mph (6700 rpm)
II 1.94 8.7 58 mph (6700 rpm)
III 1.29 13.2 88 mph (6700 rpm)
IV 0.91 18.6 102 mph (5500 rpm)
V 0.71 23.9 100 mph (4200 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase 94.5 in
Track, F/R 54.7/53.5 in
Length 165.7 in
Width 64.0 in

Height 51.4 in
Ground clearance 4.3 in
Curb weight 2160 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R 63.0/37.0%
Fuel capacity 10.6 gal

CHASSIS/BODY

Type unit construction
Body material welded steel stampings

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat 44 cu ft
rear seat 31 cu ft
trunk space 18 cu ft
Front seats bucket
Recliner type infinitely adjustable
General comfort poor fair good excellent
Fore-and-aft support poor fair good excellent
Lateral support poor fair good excellent

SUSPENSION

F: ind, MacPherson strut, coil springs
R: ind, trailing arms integral with an anti-sway bar, coil springs

STEERING

Type rack-and-pinion
Turns lock-to-lock 3.9
Turning circle curb-to-curb 31.2 ft

BRAKES

F: 9.4 x 0.5-in disc
R: 7.1 x 1.2-in cast-iron drum
Power assist vacuum

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size 5.5 x 13 in
Wheel type cast aluminum
Tire make and size Michelin XZX, 175/70SR-13
Test inflation pressures, F/R 27/27 psi

Car and Driver Test Results

ACCELERATION

	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph	3.4
40 mph	5.3
50 mph	7.9
60 mph	11.5
70 mph	15.8
80 mph	22.0
90 mph	32.2
Top-gear passing time, 30-50 mph	12.8
50-70 mph	17.8
Standing ¼-mile	18.1 sec @ 75 mph
Top speed	102 mph

HANDLING

Roadholding, 282-ft-dia skidpad 0.74 g
Understeer minimal moderate excessive

BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup 192 ft

Modulation poor fair good excellent
Fade none moderate heavy
Front-rear balance poor fair good

COAST-DOWN MEASUREMENTS

Road horsepower @ 50 mph 12.5 hp
Friction and tire losses @ 50 mph 5.5 hp
Aerodynamic drag @ 50 mph 7.0 hp

FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving 28 mpg
EPA highway driving 41 mpg
EPA combined driving 33 mpg
C/D observed fuel economy 26 mpg

INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle 55 dBA
Full-throttle acceleration 82 dBA
70-mph cruising 72 dBA
70-mph coasting 71 dBA