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VW'S '79 LINE-UP: ECONOMY, VARIETY AND PERFORMANCE

Volkswagen's 1979 line-up includes the three most economical cars available in the U.S. -- the Rabbit Diesel with either four-speed manual transmission or a new optional, five-speed and the new Dasher Diesel.

It also includes a new four-door Dasher hatchback model that replaces the Dasher sedan with a conventional trunk, a larger, more powerful engine and an optional five-speed transmission for the sporty Scirocco coupe and, as announced earlier, two- and four-door Rabbits made in VW's new American plant in Pennsylvania.

Continued virtually unchanged for 1979 are the familiar VW Convertible -- one of the last four-place convertibles available on the market -- and the boxy VW Bus, Kombi and Campmobile.

In federal Environmental Protection Agency testing, the Rabbit Diesel, equipped with the five-speed transmission delivered an estimated 41 miles per gallon in city driving, and 55 mpg in highway driving. The Rabbit Diesel four-speed was rated at 40 mpg city, 50 mpg highway by the EPA. The Dasher Diesel, in both sedan and station wagon versions, was listed by the EPA at 36 mpg city and 46 mpg highway.

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Other VW models turned in high economy figures as well, though not as spectacular as those delivered by the diesels. The gasoline-powered Rabbit equipped with the optional five-speed transmission was rated at 26 city and 42 highway. The Scirocco with optional five-speed turned in 25 mpg city and 42 mpg highway, while figures for the gasoline Dasher were 23 city and 37 highway.

The VW Bus, available in seven- and nine-passenger versions, is the most-economical van-type vehicle in the EPA buyer's guide. The EPA rated it at 17 mpg city and 23 mpg highway, while the Convertible was listed at 20 mpg city and 30 mpg highway.

-- RABBIT --

While the major technical specifications of the popular front wheel drive Rabbit hatchback remain unchanged for 1979, the exterior has a crisper look thanks to a new grille that features rectangular headlights in place of round ones used previously.

Buyers will find bright new interiors and a wider selection of color coordinated seats, dashboards and carpeting.

New as standard equipment in Rabbits are factory-installed radios. Starting later in the model year VW's passive restraint system, which consists of an automatic shoulder belt and a padded knee bolster, will be available as an option on the middle-of-the-line Rabbit "C." The system will continue to be standard on the top-of-the-line "L."

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-- DASHER --

New features in the luxurious Dasher models --two-door hatchback, four-door hatchback and four-door station wagon are self-adjusting disc/drum brakes, the addition of a radio as standard equipment and a new optional sunroof which not only slides but which can be tipped up.

The 1979 Dashers will also sport some new interior and exterior colors.

-- SCIROCCO --

Heading the list of improvements in the 1979 Scirocco is a larger more powerful engine. The displacement has been increased to 1588 cc from 1457 cc and horsepower now stands at 78 bhp (SAE Net compared with 71 SAE Net in 1978).

Like the Dasher, the Scirocco now has self-adjusting disc/drum brakes and its safety belt system has been redesigned for more comfort. Also new this year is the availability of an optional sunroof which can be removed or tilted open.

-- CONVERTIBLE --

The VW Convertible retains its Beetle-like shape, but has a number of improvements. Wider rims and wider steel-belted radial whitewall tires replace the bias ply tires used formerly. Also new this year is the addition of an intermittent operation position to the windshield wiper switch, a cigarette lighter, a clock, a leatherette covered steering wheel and a wood-grained dashboard.

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There are no changes in the 1979 Bus except for the addition of an exhaust catalyst for 49-state cars, an exhaust oxygen sensor for California cars and some new exterior colors. The Bus continues to be available in seven- and nine-passenger models with either a four-speed manual transmission or an optional three-speed automatic. Other options include a sliding steel sunroof and air conditioning. Campmobiles, including versions with a pop-up top that contains a full-size double bed, are offered.

The 1979 VWs are sold and serviced by a network of more than a thousand franchised dealers. They are backed by a 12-month, 20,000-mile limited warranty.

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