

EXCLUSIVE TEST: LAMBORGHINI JALPA

ROAD & TRACK

NOVEMBER 1982

UK £1

\$1.75

ALSO TESTED: MITSUBISHI STARION, CHEVROLET CORVETTE,
VOLKSWAGEN'S NEW RABBIT IN A RACER SUIT, THE GTI

Jumping Jehoshaphat! *Lamborghini's Jalpa*



300528 SAI 0712F091 142M JAN84
11#FM
DIR
712 FARREN DR
DIAMOND BAR CA 91765

1983 INTROS—
ALL-NEW MAZDA 626
RESTYLED TOYOTA TERCEL
NEW SIZZLE IN GM'S LINEUP





DEPRESSED? FEELING LOW? If you're a car enthusiast, we may have the cure for your ills. Get yourself down to your nearest Volkswagen dealer and ask to take a test drive in the new Rabbit GTI. Then call your loved ones and tell them you'll be home in a couple days, because if you're anything like us that's how long it will take you to come back down. What a car! Now, we've been fortunate enough to drive VW's Golf (Rabbit) GTi in Germany and have always come away with sensory imbalance—how can a car that looks like a Rabbit go so quickly? Then we heard an American Rabbit GTI was on the way and we feared a watered-down version with fancy trim, fancy wheels and tires, but surely no performance. Wrong, wrong, wrong. The U.S. Rabbit GTI team, headed by VW of America's Vice President for Engineering Duane Miller, has come up with a car that is the panacea for everything from the blues to the blahs.

At the press preview for the GTI, Miller explained that the initial plan was to build a more modest version of the car, adding only sport seats and "GTI-like" suspension to the Rabbit S. But it immediately became apparent that the S with the GTI suspension was a disappointment because the U.S. Rabbit weighs more than the European Golf—so the improved handling made the relative lack of horsepower seem worse than it was.

Miller says two events in Germany in 1981 made the U.S. GTI a possibility: first, the introduction of 14-in. alloy wheels for the Quantum that would also fit the Rabbit; second, a decision to develop a federalized version of the 1.8-liter high performance engine slotted for the 1983 Golf GTi. With the more powerful engine and the ability to use larger and wider wheels and tires, the engineers at VW of America felt they had the necessary ingredients to make their own GTI.

The suspension is as similar to the Golf GTi as possible, bearing in mind a weight difference of 140–200 lb. To handle the extra weight of the Rabbit, the front spring rate was made 22 percent stiffer than the Golf's (or the 1982 Rabbit's), and the rear springs were changed from progressive to linear—while their rate is the same as the Golf's, they are 29 percent stiffer than those of this year's Rabbit. Shock absorber control was also increased, and the front MacPherson struts are from the Golf GTi and give two-thirds more rebound control than stock equipment. The rear shocks are similar to those of the European GTi, but they have stiffer valving designed specifically for the American GTI.

The final touches for the Rabbit GTI were anti-roll bars front and rear (16.5 mm/20.5 mm, respectively) to minimize body roll during cornering, and the largest tires/wheels ever offered on a Rabbit or Golf: 185/60HR-14 Pirelli P6s mounted on 14 x 6-in. alloy rims. Miller claims the result is a suspension system ➤

AT A GLANCE

	Volkswagen Rabbit GTI	BMW 320i	Chevrolet Citation X11
List price	est \$8500	\$13,290	\$6754
Curb weight, lb	2070	2435	2775
Engine	inline-4	inline-4	V-6
Transmission	5-sp M	5-sp M	4-sp M
0-60 mph, sec	10.6	11.1	9.9
Standing ¼ mi, sec	17.7	18.0	17.3
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	76.0	77.0	80.0
Stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	153	169	154
Interior noise at 50 mph, dBA	71	69	69
Lateral acceleration, g	0.797	0.743	0.826
Slalom speed, mph	61.3	58.6	61.1
Fuel economy, mpg	29.0	26.0	19.5
Issue		2-80	10-82

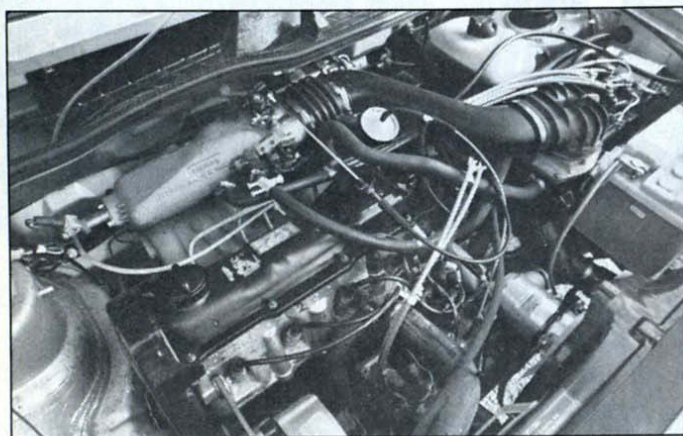


VOLKSWAGEN RABBIT GTI

Street racer in a bunny suit

PHOTOS BY JOE RU SZ





that stresses balance above all else: "We believe it to be an exceptional combination of low-speed responsiveness and high-speed stability, of strong linear-range handling and 'forgiving' limit behavior. All with a ride quality that never interferes with the car's ability to double as a family sedan." An impressive declaration to be sure especially in light of the current Rabbit's strong understeer and overall lack of crispness.

The new engine is actually the old engine with some modifications. The 1982 Rabbit's engine displaces 1715 cc and boasts 74 bhp (SAE net) at 5000 rpm, with 94 lb-ft torque at 3000. The GTI powerplant has a larger bore (81.0 mm versus 79.5) to bump the displacement to 1780 cc. The cylinder head has been redesigned with larger intake and exhaust valves, and the pistons are 20 percent lighter. The compression ratio is 8.5:1 for the GTI, compared to 8.2:1 for the standard car, and the result is a bhp figure of 90 at 5500 rpm, and the torque is 105 lb-ft at 3250. VW continues to use K-Jetronic fuel injection for the new engine, along with an electronic ignition and a digital idle stabilizer to ensure excellent driveability. Adding to the engine's performance is an all-new free-flow exhaust system with large-diameter tubing and reengineered converter and muffler baffling to provide a 35-percent reduction in back pressure compared to that of the standard Rabbit.

VW has also tailored a 5-speed close-ratio gearbox to the GTI's performance capabilities, and there's a heavy-duty clutch to go with it. The final drive ratio is 3.94:1 in the GTI versus 3.89:1 in the 1982 Rabbit. The front brake discs are now vented rather than solid on this special model. Exterior changes include a flexible urethane front air dam that ties into the front fender flares, extensive use of flat-black trim all around the car, and red

grille border and red GTI nameplates. Otherwise, the GTI is a sleeper, virtually indistinguishable from any other Rabbit at a distance.

Inside, the GTI has some appropriate features that make it a serious driver's car. The sport seats are "functional duplicates" of German GTi seats, and the foam padding is imported because VW of America couldn't find a supplier with acceptable material here. There is a new 4-spoke padded steering wheel that offers excellent grip, and a tachometer and center console with additional gauges are standard. The GTI package also includes halogen headlights, left and right remote-control mirrors, the distinctive golf-ball style shift knob and rear wiper/washer.

Now that you have all of the background on what makes the Rabbit GTI different, let us tell you what really makes it different—the driving. Plain and simple, go-for-it fun, and we mean FUN! "One quick trip around the block and you won't want to give this one up," enthused one of our editors, while another described the GTI as a "Basic pocket-rocket street racer carried to subtle limits . . . The fun quotient in this sleeper is maximum!" And perhaps the most telling comment from one of us (keeping in mind that we each drive 80 to 100 different cars per year), "Here's a car I would actually buy with my own money."

And what performance would we be buying? How about 10.6 seconds, 0-60 mph? Or a quarter-mile time of 17.7 sec at 76.0 mph? For a 2200-lb car with a 1.8-liter engine, this is performance that gives grown men and women toothy smiles and enormous grins. The last Rabbit we tested ("Four Front-Wheel-Drive Sedans," February 1981) was the quickest car in that comparison test with a 0-60 mph time of 12.6 sec and a quarter-mile run of 18.7 sec at 71.0 mph (the other three cars were Ford

Escort, Honda Accord and Mazda GLC). At 10.6 sec, 0-60, the Rabbit GTI will put a lot of more expensive cars to shame—such as the Audi Coupe (11.2) or the BMW 320i (11.1), as well as running a very close second to a Saab 900 Turbo (10.0).

But straight-line acceleration is only part of the GTI's balanced performance story, because the handling capabilities may impress you even more than the power. Its road manners are so damned impressive that we just couldn't drive the car enough—any excuse to jump in it and hit the pavement and we took it. On the objective side, we measured a lateral acceleration of 0.797g, and ran through our 700-ft slalom at 61.3 mph—for comparison, we measured the Porsche 911SC (May 1980) at 0.798g on the skidpad and 59.7 mph in the slalom.

VW's Rabbit GTI is so much more than just a track car, though. It's a car built and bred for twisty mountain roads and city streets: "It corners like you won't believe with none of the tipsy feel of recent Rabbits," noted one driver following a high-speed mountain run. He added that equally impressive is the suspension's marvelous compliance that produces smooth ride characteristics to go with the crisp handling. The rack-and-pinion steering is unboosted and while slightly heavy at very low speeds, none of our drivers would care to change it at all. Feedback from the Pirelli P6 tires is excellent and the combination of

steering and tires gives the driver an extremely precise feel for what is happening at the road. The close-ratio 5-speed makes you feel like you're driving a Formula Ford on the road. No matter what gear you're in, you're never at a loss for torque.

The sport seats, as VW likes to call them, are marvelously comfortable for nearly any person of any size, and they provide excellent lateral support during all the high-speed cornering every driver is going to be doing with this car. Otherwise, the interior is recognizably American Rabbit with the heavily padded vinyl dash and generally tasteful trim treatment. One criticism we have to level: without the optional air conditioning, there are no fresh air vents in the center part of the dash, and that's tacky. We also thought that the sun visors and headliner fabric look rather cheap, but all in all the color coordination and level of quality are quite good.

Well, we could go on for days singing the praises of the Rabbit GTI, but if you fancy yourself some kind of car enthusiast and hot-shoe driver, you're probably already on the way to the nearest VW dealer. If not, you better hurry. Manufacturing limits on the new 1.8 engine will restrict U.S. GTI production to 20,000 cars per year, and they should sell like lemonade in August. At an estimated price of \$8500, the Rabbit GTI is the most exciting automotive news of the year.

SPECIFICATIONS

List price, all POE	est \$8500
Price as tested	est \$9000
Price as tested includes std equip (alloy wheels, Pirelli P6 tires, sport seats), AM/FM stereo/cassette (est \$500)	

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg	2070/940
Test weight	2200/999
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, %	63/37
Wheelbase, in./mm	94.5/2400
Track, front/rear	54.7/53.1/1390/1350
Length	155.3/3945
Width	63.4/1610
Height	55.5/1410
Trunk space, cu ft/liters	10.4 + 10.7/295 + 303
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters	10.0/38

ENGINE

Type	sohc inline-4
Bore x stroke, in./mm	3.19 x 3.40/81.0 x 86.4
Displacement, cu in./cc	109/1780
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net/kW	90/70 @ 5500
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm	105/142 @ 3250
Fuel injection	Bosch K-Jetronic
Fuel requirement	unleaded, 91-oct

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.91)	3.58:1
4th (1.13)	4.45:1
3rd (1.44)	5.67:1
2nd (2.12)	8.35:1
1st (3.49)	13.75:1
Final drive ratio	3.94:1

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	transverse front engine/front drive
Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	9.4-in. (239-mm) vented discs front, 7.1 x 1.2-in. (180 x 30-mm) drums rear; vacuum asst
Wheels	cast alloy, 14 x 6J
Tires	Pirelli P6, 185/60HR-14
Steering type	rack & pinion
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.8
Suspension, front/rear	MacPherson struts, lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/beam axle on trailing arms with integral anti-roll bar, coil springs, tube shocks

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)	24.4
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	18.2
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	3300
R&T steering index	1.19
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	216

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	3.5
0-500 ft	9.3
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)	17.7
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph	76.0
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	2.9
0-50 mph	7.4
0-60 mph	10.6
0-70 mph	14.6
0-80 mph	20.8

SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (5900 rpm)	107
4th (6700)	98
3rd (6700)	78
2nd (6700)	54
1st (6700)	32

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	29.0
---------------------	------

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	153
From 80 mph	264
Control in panic stop	excellent
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	17
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph	18
Overall brake rating	excellent

HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g	0.797
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	61.3

INTERIOR NOISE

Constant 30 mph, dBA	68
50 mph	71
70 mph	79

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually	28.0
60 mph	60.0

ACCELERATION

