



PHOTOS BY LES BIDRAWN

VOLKSWAGEN CABRIOLET
RICOLECTOR



It's no secret that VW of America has been hurt by the time lag between the debut of the new A3 models in Europe and their appearance in the U.S. There's also no doubt that VW wouldn't mind our mentioning the presence of some attractive VW automobiles for sale, right here, right now, at your local VW dealership, so come on down...ta dah!

Hype aside, the Passat and Corrado VR6s should be considered among the leaders in their respective market segments, the EuroVan appeals to those who need a lot of space on wheels, and there's still the Cabriolet, now in its fourteenth year of U.S. sales. And even though it's ripe for revision, the Cabrio is still a sweetheart of a convertible.

Its replacement is scheduled to debut at this September's Frankfurt show, and a smart looking piece it is. When it arrives here next year, it will continue thirty-seven straight years of Volkswagen ragtop

sales in the United States, which began, of course, with the Beetle convertible.

Meanwhile, there are still a few current Cabrios looking for homes. This special Collector's Edition is the base model for '93, priced at \$18,380, and it's joined by the higher content, higher price Cabriolet Classic with a sticker of \$19,930.

These Cabrios sport standard issue VW mechanicals, the hard specs remaining unchanged from the 1992s. A 1.8-liter four with 94 bhp drives the front wheels through a five-speed manual transmission; a three-speed automatic is optional. Standard, too, is the poise and controllability provided by power rack and pinion steering, power brakes with 9.4-in. front vented discs, 14-in. wheels with 185/60s, and a well-tuned independent suspension.

As befits what is a limited production vehicle (4,400 final-year Cabriolets are being produced at the Karmann coachworks

The last of its type,
it's also the whitest

before the new Cabrio line is started), the car's interior is upmarket. Even the base Cabrio offers as standard an AM/FM cassette stereo with six speakers; front power windows; white leatherette-clad sports seats with driver's side height adjustment; leather steering wheel; a folding rear seat with trunk access; and a driver's side airbag. Air conditioning (\$895) and the three-speed automatic (\$595) cost extra. Both models are distinguished externally by "Collector's Edition" badges; body-

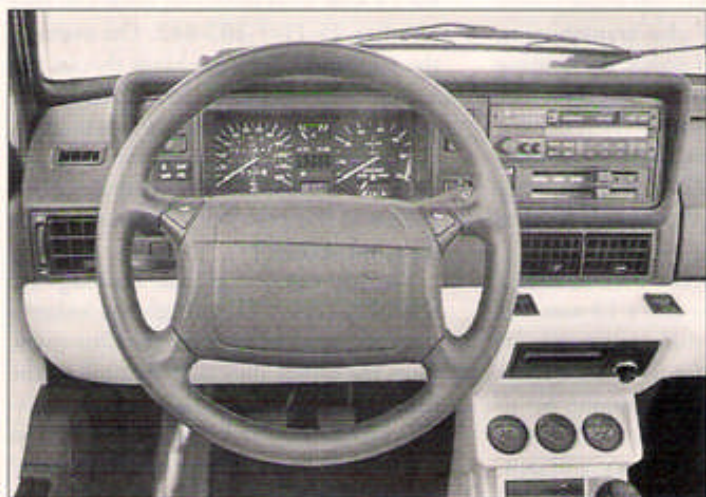
color treatment to the bumpers and aprons, the mirror housings, wheel-house flares and rocker moldings; a boot cover for the manually operated

folding top in the car's exterior color; and black narrow bodyside molding.

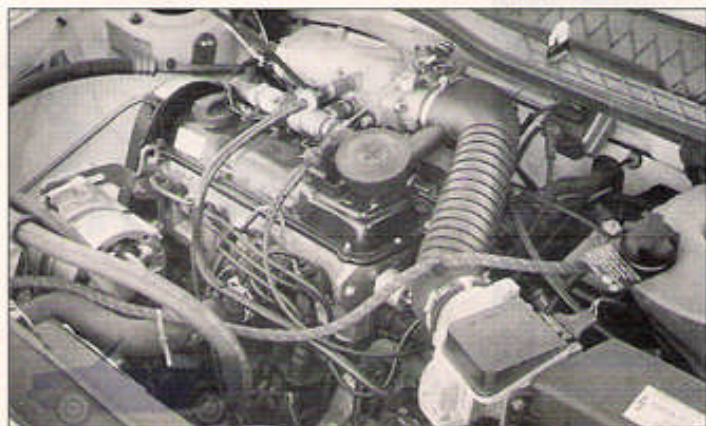
The Classic offers a few more items as standard, including a/c; cruise control; seven-spoke forged alloy wheels (still 14 in.); heatable front seats; leather-faced sports seats; and leather over the manual shift knob, shift boot and hand brake cover. The three-speed is still optional.

After sampling VW's new VR6, or even the standard 115-bhp 2.0-liter four in the upcoming U.S.-spec A3 Golf and GTI,

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SEDITION



VOLKSWAGEN CABRIOLET

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Higher content Cabriolet Classic offers more standard equipment than the base Collector's Edition but is mechanically identical.

this 1.8 at first feels sluggish. But, the manual transmission is a good one, with ratios well suited to the power curve. Despite the 1.8's relative lack of power, however, the powerband is broad, and the engine can be revved without shaking loose from the motor mounts. And owners dissatisfied with the stock power can dip into a good supply of aftermarket speed equipment, including legal cams, exhausts and cylinder head mods.

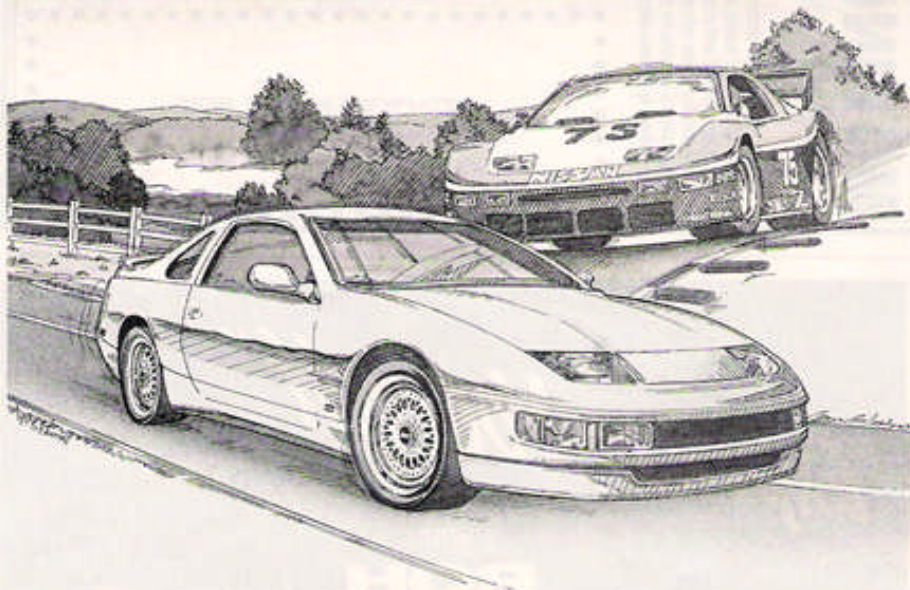
The Cabrio's dynamic qualities are surprising to any who might suspect such a long-lived model would have become a flat-footed laggard. The chassis is exceptionally rigid for a convertible. A number of reinforcements are assisted by safety cell construction and the roll bar, and the resulting stiffness is a major contributor to its crisp handling. The front suspension is MacPherson strut/coil spring with a 16.5mm stabilizer bar. At the rear is a 20.5mm bar, stabilizer axle with trailing arms and coil springs.

It's a nimble town car, turn-in is as good as in any front-driver for the twisties, and road harshness is nicely dampened by the touring-quality ride. It's an all-around athlete type of car—pulling together all its resources to provide the elements of pleasurable driving.

Given its long life and relatively minor styling changes, it's little wonder the VW ragtop's popularity has waned over the last several seasons. Underneath the familiar exterior, though, hundreds of running changes have made the newest—and last of its type—Cabriolet a desirable car to own.

And here's a prediction, born out of the Mazda Miata phenomenon. The Japanese roadster satisfied an impassioned (and unexpected) yearning for an inexpensive, fun convertible. The competition was stunned. (Or killed. Remember the Lotus Elan?) Look for the next generation Golf Cabriolet, with its superior A3 chassis and contemporary styling, to create a German form of Miata fever and become an instant classic in a long line of classics. ❧

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