

Rescued Ragtop

Singular Styling
for an '81 Cabriolet

Article and photos by Les Bidrawn

First impressions are important, and the immediate sensation one gets from Kasie Kannike's stunning ebony-black convertible is late-model luxury. From the integrated Euro-styled bumpers to the sumptuous custom interior, this Volkswagen speaks in soft, showroom-pampered tones.

However, this wasn't always the case. At one point, this polished California gem was an ailing 1981 strip, devoid of even an engine to move it from the dusty street.

Kannike has always had an affinity for European machines, owning a succession of various Volkswagens and Porsches. The '81 convertible featured here was purchased for a mere \$2000, after close inspection of a Zender-styled ragtop convinced him he could build a better cabriolet. Starting from bare Karmann coachworks, the basic componentry was assembled until the car had a windshield, windows, dash, decklid and so on.





(If you start with a project of this magnitude, you might want to try The Recycled Rabbit or BMWV. They can supply everything for frame off restorations.)

The motor was rescued from a folded 1987 unit, along with the trans, steering and spindles. To enhance the suspension set-up, Automotive Performance Systems supplied front and rear anti-roll bars, a front shock tower brace, and provided some adjustable Tokicos so rigidity can be dialed in at will.

Having completed the basics, Kannike went to the rendering board and designed his accessory plan utilizing the Zender catalog and FB Motorsports (1580 Centinela Blvd., Inglewood, CA, 213/677-1582), who provided the hardware. FB Motorsports carries the stunningly-styled Zender Z-20 body kit with integrated bumpers, and they also handle a full line of quality Centra wheels. Kannike chose Centra Stars (7x15), the chroming compliments of Custom Wheels in North Hollywood. The Centras were then wrapped with 195/50-15 Bridgestone



Potenzas for extra stickiness when carving up the local canyons. Completing the Euro-look, dual 7-in. halogen headlamps integrate smoothly into the front grille. Auto Connection in Los Angeles liberally bathed the entire rig in numerous coats of black lacquer, which was then laden with extra gloss.

The interior is graced with more of Kannike's talent and features a covered custom cockpit from Julius at California Motoring Accessories. KRS-XT Recaros received tan fabric with black piping, while the matching tonal dash sports custom gauges from Gauge West. The driver's bucket is motorized (pirated from a new, freshly bent 16V Jetta), allowing quick access to the beautiful wooden Ital Volanti wheel and Autolook shift knob. Sunset Glass Tinting in L.A. provided protective window tinting.

With another \$1700 to spend, this cabrio was wired for sound via a Soundstream 308 tuner, a three-way crossover system, a pair of Epsilon air-cooled amps, and assorted speakers that leave this Volkswagen with nearly 500 watts of tuneable audio power.

Kannike has plans to begin a slope-nose 911 project and we look forward to seeing the results.

