

HORSEPOWER RACE FOR VOLKSWAGEN?

The Beetle's Been Bitten by the Safety Bug!



MUSCULAR NEW beetles are powered by 91.1-cu. in. engines, rated at 53 bhp—most powerful yet for VW sedans. U.S.-oriented safety items for '67 include tandem brake system, reversing lights, 2-speed windshield wipers and soft plastic control knobs.

WHY IS Volkswagen of Germany producing a "beetle" expressly for U.S. trade?

The beetle has been bitten by the safety bug.

VW now is building a U.S.-only version of the familiar little Teuton in order to maintain its hold on a very healthy segment of the U.S. car market. This new-model competition with U.S.-built cars and factory add-ons is a result of America's 1966 spring safety festival.

Last year, the VW 1300 (CL, Nov. '65) sedan made its debut. Based on the previous penchant for model longevity demonstrated by the Wolfsburg-ers, followers of automotive trends predicted a long manufacturing life for that car. The automotive seers, however, failed to consider the hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization of the Com-

mittee on Government Operations—synonymous with automotive safety.

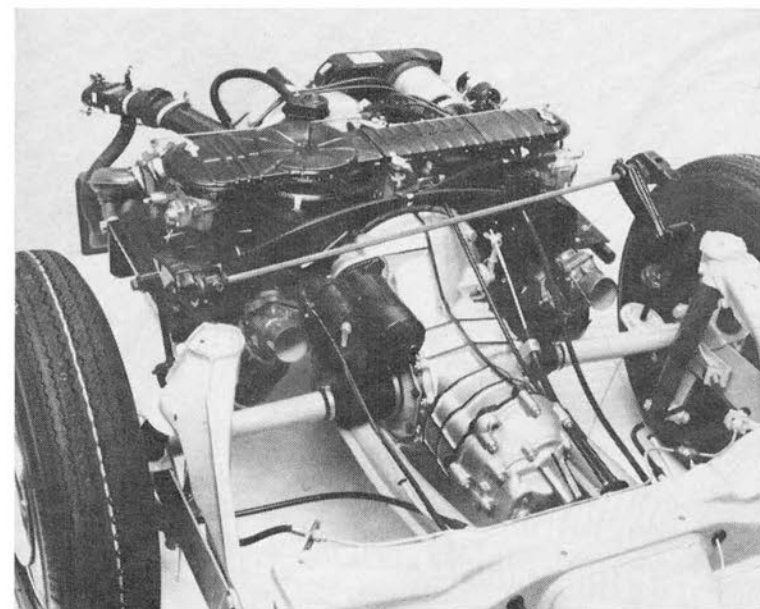
The 1300 (CL, Sept. '66) withered in the heat of senatorial review. The VW delivered for 1967 sale in the U.S. is its successor. This car carries reshaped front fenders for revised headlight mounting, has a wider rear track and displays a plumper rump for accommodation of a larger displacement engine.

Under the skin, the special export beetle receives the U.S.-demanded tandem master brake cylinder and dual brake line circuitry, a 12-v. instead of 6-v. electrical system, retracting and automatically adjusting front seat belts, rear seat belt anchorages, twin reversing lights, 2-speed windshield wipers, recessed interior door handles, revised door locks, soft plastic knobs for dash-mounted and window controls, and a new battery location. All of these so-

called safety items can be found on U.S. cars for 1967.

With the modifications dictated by the safety hue and cry, the 1967 beetle is given a 91.1-cu. in. (1493 cc) engine which replaces the so-called 1300 engine which displaced 78.42 cu. in. (1285 cc). The increased displacement raises the VW's rated bhp from 50 to 53. The new VW delivers 14% more torque than did the 1300. The earlier model produced 67.7 lb.-ft. at 2600 rpm; the 1967 sedan's engine produces 78 lb.-ft. at like engine speed.

That rise in torque delivery is matched to a lower drive axle ratio, dropped from 4.375:1 in the 1966 1300 model to 4.125:1 in the 1967 U.S. special. In the transmission, third gear has been changed from 1.32:1 to 1.26:1 with the aim of faster acceleration and fewer hilly road downshifts than were necessary with the 1300.



REAR SUSPENSION on all '67 VWs employs softer torsion bars and a transverse auxiliary spring, shown above with the 96.66-cu. in./65-bhp engine which is the standard powerplant for Squareback and Fastback, below.



MAJOR EXTERIOR change, apparent in the 1967 VW is in front fenders, reshaped for more efficient headlamp mounting.

Otherwise, gearing remains, first, second and fourth, at 3.80, 2.06 and 0.89. The new engine and gearing raise the sedan's top speed from 75 to 78 mph.

Identical engine and gearing give the Karmann Ghia version of the VW a top speed of 82 mph. The 4-mph differential most likely can be attributed to the Ghia's lesser frontal area, which is 18.7 sq. ft., as compared with the sedan's 19.9 sq. ft.

The larger engine makes necessary a bustle-like hump at the rear of the sedan and an increase in overall length of 0.4 in. The end result is an increase in box volume over the 1966 body of 1.5 cu. ft. stuffed with engine.

Tweakers of VWs for years, using various methods, have widened the beetle's rear tread with the idea of gaining increased stability through a wider stance. Now the wider rear tread is standard on the U.S. special. The

1300's rear track was 51.2 in.; the 1967 model measures 53.4 in. The new model also has a less husky spring rate for its rear torsion bars, but an auxiliary spring over the rear axle restores progressively firmer springing. These suspension modifications add up to a softer ride and better handling under load or rough road conditions, the manufacturer says.

The VW Fastback and Squareback sedans for 1967 also received the safety once-over. They now have a dual braking system, backup lights, front seat belts of the automatic retractor-adjuster variety, the rear belt anchorages, push button door lock controls and soft plastic control knobs. VW station wagons and trucks are similarly equipped for 1967.

Backs both Fast and Square continue with the twin-carburetor, 96.66-cu. in. (1584 cc) engine, rated

at 65 bhp. Final drive gearing remains at 4.125:1. The main gearbox also is given the new 1.26 third gear ratio. Rear suspension components of these two cars also have received softening treatment.

VW's box-like station wagons and trucks retain the 91.1-cu. in. engine for 1967. Final drive gearing is 4.375:1, and main gearbox ratios are identical to the sedan and Ghia models with the exception of fourth gear which is 0.82:1. These ratios are compounded by a reduction gear drive ratio of 1.26:1.

With import leader Volkswagen obviously dancing the Detroit quickstep to the Washington piper's tune, it seems incumbent on other foreign manufacturers to learn *Turkey in the Straw* and *Chicken Reel*, or become wallflowers in the American automotive square dance.