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Full test **NEW BMW 325i**

Master stroke

Lusty performance and razor-sharp handling are hallmarks of the Golf G60 Limited, a VW Motorsport special that rolls all of VW's best bits into one package. Mark Harrop is impressed

VOLKSWAGEN HAS MADE 70 PEOPLE very happy. That's the number of lucky motorists the Wolfsburg manufacturer has equipped with the Golf G60 Limited, a car that was the subject of over 1000 enquiries when it was announced to dealers in Germany last year but only had a production run of 70.

Conceived as a challenge for VW's increasingly active motorsport division, it is a car whose sum is even greater than its parts. And that's a particularly praiseworthy feat when you consider the set of parts the Limited boasts. From the VW stock cupboard have come such mouthwatering delights as the suspension and gearbox from the Group A Rallye Golf, the four-wheel drive system from the Syncro and a supercharger for VW's well-known 16-valve 1.8-litre engine. In this guise, a Limited driver will discover 210bhp beneath his right foot — enough to make this the fastest production Volkswagen ever — and, thanks to the clever syncro system, more than ample traction to make good use of it.

What you will really love, though, is the

buckets of low-down torque that the G-lader blower and intercooler create. Not for you the deathly quiet below 4000rpm of normal 16-valvers, or the back-busting thrust of a turbo-charger. Instead, from as low as 1000rpm you can bury your foot in the firewall and watch the front of the car gobble up ever larger amounts of tarmac. The Limited gathers speed like a snowball down a hill and will continue to pump you faster and faster towards the horizon, reaching its peak power in each gear just 300rpm short of the engine's 6800rpm red line.

In a straight line, admittedly, the Limited doesn't quite set your pulse on fire like an Integrale 16v; subjectively, the Lancia's 200bhp two-litre unit seems to provide much more firepower. Sure enough, at the track the computer reveals that the Delta breaks the 0-60mph barrier in 6.3secs, half a second quicker than the Golf. At the quarter-mile post the Limited is only 0.3secs shy of the Integrale's 14.9secs, but the VW's better aerodynamics and 20.9mph per 1000rpm gearing

in fifth allow it to fly to an impressive 139mph top speed and leave the Lancia flailing in its wake.

There's even more ammunition for the Limited driver to unload in the performance-over-a-pint discussion at the local pub. The car's tremendous torque proves invaluable when it comes to overtaking; it leaps the fourth-gear 30-50mph increment in just 6.5secs. That's well over a second quicker than the Integrale, just under a second in front of Ford's Sapphire Cosworth 4x4 and neck and neck with BMW's masterful M5. The Golf is certainly man enough to rub shoulders with some pretty demanding company.

Show these cars a twisty, wet A-road, though, and the Limited transforms from man to He-man. It'd be a brave person who would bet against the Golf romping out the other end in front. The Limited's ability to stick to the tarmac, or, more importantly, the areas of tarmac *you've* chosen, is simply awesome. Barrel into a tight corner, clip the apex with your foot planted to the floor and the Golf will attack the exit with almost indecent haste and staggering security. Better still in these wet spring months, a liberal dousing of rain will do little to affect the Limited's progress.

The key to exploiting the car's handling prowess is to keep on the gas. That way the syncro system will be pumping power to all four bits of rubber as you throw yourself into corners with all the wild confidence of a kiddie in a bouncy castle. Enter the same bend with a trailing throttle, however, and the story is quite different — the syncro system reverts to supplying only the front wheels as in normal driving.

Push towards the limits of the tyres' adhesion, though, and you provoke little more than mild understeer and a screech of protest from the Continental Sport Contact 195/50 VR15 rubber. Only on a long, fast bend can the tail be persuaded to step out, and then only under strong provocation and with little drama, as the drivetrain begins to feed the power rearwards.

This level of ability is matched by the performance of the brakes. With anti-lock as standard, they respond smoothly and effectively to instruction and show no signs of fade during repeated hard stopping.

From the command centre, it is only the steering's tendency to provide a slightly blurred picture of events at the front wheels that interrupts an otherwise masterful flow of information. But when you consider this in the context of its well-weighted precision and speed, it gives little cause for complaint.

The five-speed gearbox, borrowed from the Passat, is less inspiring. Stirring the cogs quickly is hindered by a notchy change, and a quick second to third change will easily beat

STAN PAPIOR



PETER BURN



Handling is flawless and grip staggering; 4wd system rewards press-on driving

VW GOLF G60 LIMITED

LAYOUT

Transverse, front engine, four-wheel drive.

ENGINE

Capacity 1781cc, 4 cylinders in line.

Bore 81mm **Stroke** 86.4mm.

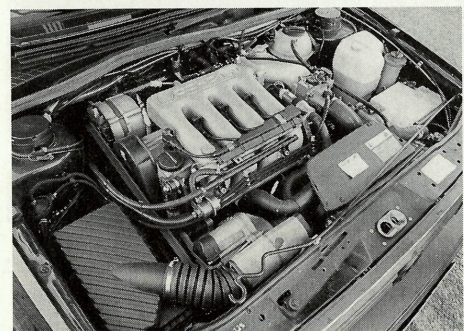
Compression ratio 8.8:1.

Head/block alloy/alloy.

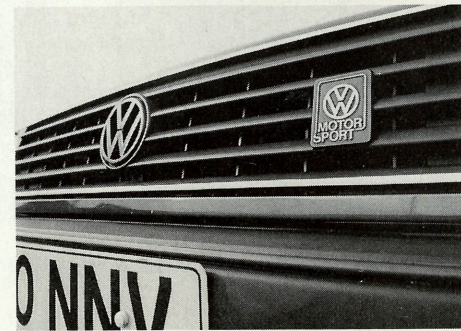
Valve gear dohc, four valves per cylinder.

Fuel and ignition electronic ignition, Digifant electronic fuel injection, G60 supercharger, two regulated catalysts.

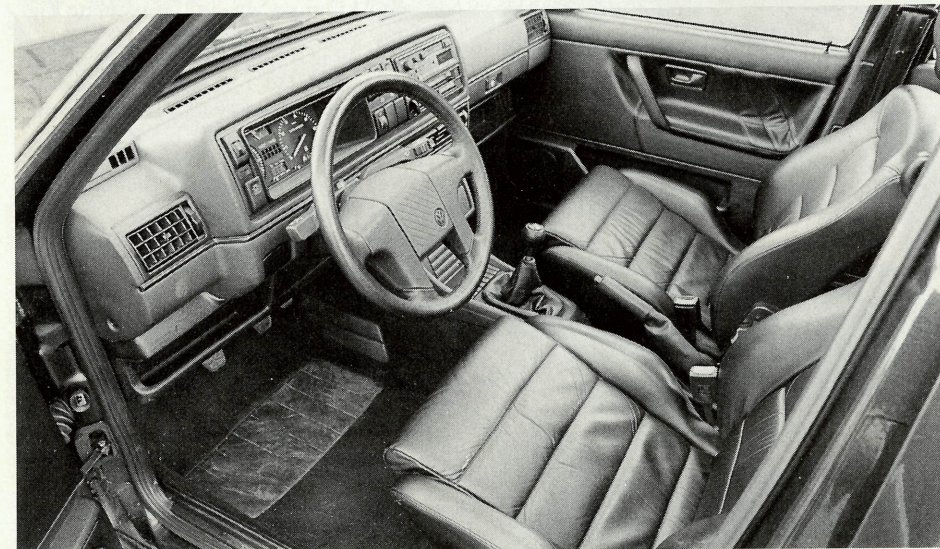
Max power 210bhp (PS-DIN) (155kW ISO) at 6500rpm. **Max torque** 186lb ft (252Nm) at 5000rpm.



Blown 16v engine is terrifically torquey



VW Motorsport's badging is discreet



Limited is left-hand drive, take it or leave it. Leather is part of the up-spec package