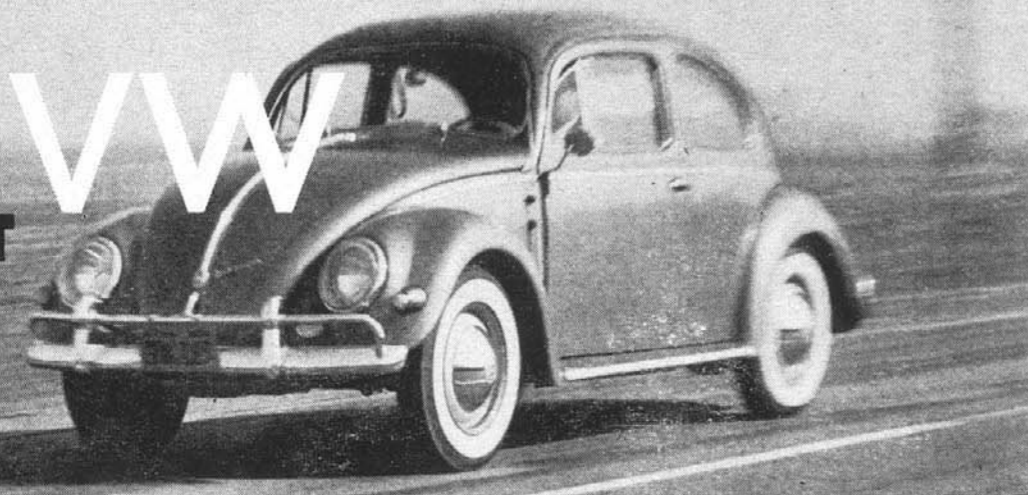


MODIFIED VW ROAD TEST



A TOP SPEED OF 77 MPH WAS RECORDED, WITH TWO PASSENGERS AND TEST EQUIPMENT ABOARD, FROM THIS OKRASA MODIFIED VW

THE CURRENT CAR ERA is one in which drivers expect a great deal from their machines in the way of performance. So it is most unusual, to say the least, that the Volkswagen, for which there is an unprecedented demand, has nothing special to offer in this category, except for the gasoline economy that is an accepted feature of many imported sedans.

In brief, when it comes to accelerating ability, the VW just about holds its own in its class—and that's all.

Now, however, something new to the U.S. has turned up which changes the picture considerably. It is an imported power kit, called the Okrasa unit, that can be added to any VW. With it, in comparison to stock performance, the little wagon really turns on the steam. It'll cut a good 10 seconds off the 0-60 time!

The test of a VW for this report was arranged for the purpose of assembling just such evidence. The car involved was a 1956 VW, well run in with 15,000 miles on the odometer. It was as stock as they come, except for the Okrasa heads and dual manifolds.

In addition to recording the performance of the modified VW, the test provided an excellent opportunity to evaluate the car after it had seen extensive service.

Volkswagen could be third or fourth in sales in the U.S., it has been said, if the car was available in sufficient quantity and exploited effectively. How close the VW could come to hitting this mark can't even be estimated. But the VW population unquestionably would reach amazing totals under more favorable conditions.

Why is the VW so popular? The car has been on hand, in substantially the same form, long enough for its characteristics to become well known. There are other cars, both imported and domestic, that offer more in performance, greater interior room and comfort, plus better styling, economy, handling and a quieter ride. Some of them even make these features available at lower cost.

Like the bumble bee which theoretically can't fly but goes ahead and does it anyway, the VW yields superiority in the foregoing categories and still booms along in growing popularity. It enjoys virtually unmatched demand and resale value, backed up by a solid front of owner loyalty.

If there is a secret in the standard VW's success—disregarding for the moment the possibilities of the Okrasa-VW—it can only be the bumper-to-bumper quality. The metal and paint, the rubber and leather are all bound together in a tight, well-fitting and rattle-free package of exceptional materials and assembly. There are no gadgets or gimmicks in the accepted

sense, although signs of cleverly functional design are abundant. Such sound but Spartan quality is uncommon these days and this alone is enough to set the VW clearly apart and a notch above the crowd. Slamming a door seems like a preposterous test for any car, but if it's your favorite method, you'll find the VW checks out on this, as well as many other points, magnificently.

While the functional simplicity of the VW is commendable, by U.S. standards it has its shortcomings. For instance, the instruments include all those necessary, except for a gas gage (that can be had as an accessory). So it takes a little watching of mileage, although there is an auxiliary reserve that will provide an extra 40 or 50 miles if needed.

Headroom in the rear seat is limited, as is luggage space under the hood. And in this age of automatics, a four-speed gear box manually shifted will not rate universal cheers.

Nonetheless, the VW must be measured as a low-cost economy vehicle and as such it ranks as outstanding. The few faults it does have are more than offset by its solid qualities, many of which cannot be had for double the money, or more! This is the basis for its appeal.

In the matter of performance, the VW in stock form calls mostly for third gear driving in traffic. What is lacking most of all, aside from a little quieter operation, is adequate passing speed. Average acceleration times, about par for the class, are shown in the accompanying spec box.

The VW engine, of course, is a four-cylinder opposed air-cooled unit, very unspectacular. It is, however, quite reliable, as is the rest of the car.

With the Okrasa unit, acceleration times are improved to a remarkable degree. What is more important and of greater practical value, however, is the fact that much of the up- and down-shifting in traffic is eliminated. More use of the fourth speed in the box is possible.

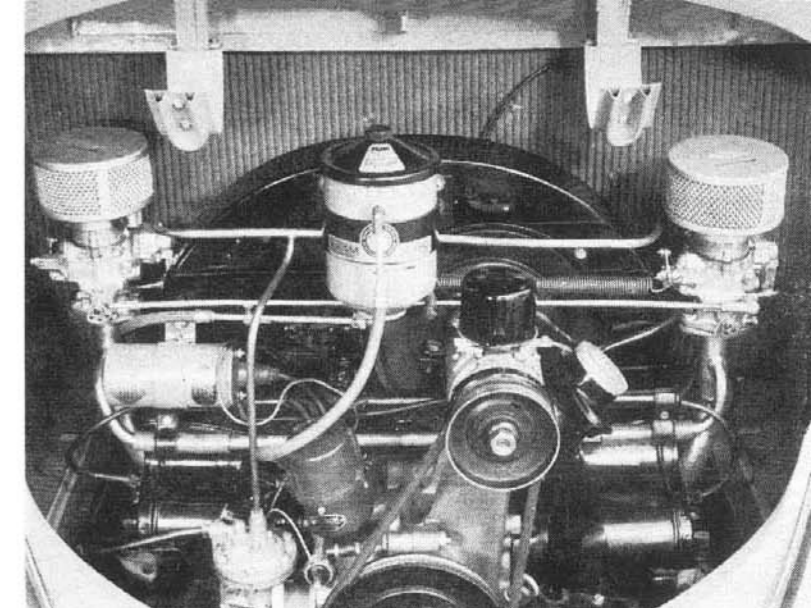
The test of the modified VW showed the following times: 0-30 mph in 5.7 seconds, 0-45 mph in 10.2 and 0-60 mph in 18.7. By comparison, a stock VW times would run about: 0-30 mph in 6.9 seconds, 0-45 mph in 14.5 and 0-60 mph in 28 fat.

In other words, some real chopping of times has been the result. In addition, where it takes a stock VW some 66 seconds to go from 0 to its top speed of 70 mph, the Okrasa-VW will hit 70 in 28 seconds, then go on to a higher top of 77 mph. The improvement obviously is substantial.

What does the Okrasa do to the VW's economy? On the basis of this test, there is a slight penalty of maybe two or three mpg, at the most, bringing it from an average of 35



REAR END of the Volkswagen is one of the better views of the bug-like little car, and in this case, one that will be seen quite often. Fifth wheel is for speedometer calibrations, to insure accuracy of test.



DUAL SOLEX carburetors, similar to the ones used on the Porsche, distinguish the Okrasa powered VW from its stock counterpart. Performance (especially acceleration) of the little car is very good.

down in the neighborhood of 32 mpg.

The Okrasa unit is priced at \$249 for the standard VW sedans and is \$259 when purchased for the custom Karmann-Ghia coupe. This is a lot of money, but the head castings alone are pretty enough to put on your mantelpiece. As a matter of fact, the multiple fins and chambers are so intricate that the fee looks almost as if it's cutrate. Further, it should be kept in mind that the initial price for a VW is low enough—\$1600 on the West Coast and \$1500 at eastern ports—so the additional investment is not too painful.

The output improvements include boosting the compression ratio from the stock 6.6-to-1 to 7.5, while better breathing is aided by two Porsche-type Solex carburetors. The exact horsepower ratings, with the new setup, are not available.

The VW's brake system, which is subject to fading, is not one of its strongest points. This is one of the reasons for discouraging ambitious owners from transplanting a Porsche engine into their favorite, unless they are prepared to improve the brakes at the same time. With the Okrasa unit, however, the stopping power appears to still be adequate.

Steering characteristics, of course, remain stock. The car handles well for any normal road purposes, except in high winds. As a rear-engine car, there is a tendency to oversteer and it is easy to break loose. Turning is quick and maneuverability is excellent.

The major points can be summed up like this: the stock VW is a very practical little car, featuring exceptional quality, economy and reliability. Its lack of interior room and moderate performance are up to individual taste and requirements.

With the Okrasa unit, present VW owners have an opportunity to obtain increased performance, if that is their aim, while potential buyers should not let the average performance of a stock VW rule out the make entirely. Actually, the price of the VW with the Okrasa setup still is on a good competitive level with other imported sedans in the low-priced economy class.

There have been some rumors of major redesign in next year's models of the VW. These have not yet been substantiated and the latest reports from Germany indicate that any alterations made will be relatively minor in nature. •

OKRASA HEAD, foreground, compared with stock VW head. Note the added breathing capacity furnished by the two ports in the new head. Compression ratio is also raised, adding to overall efficiency.

VOLKSWAGEN TEST DATA

Test Car: 1956 Volkswagen deluxe sedan
 Base Price: \$1595 West Coast (\$1495 East Coast)
 Engine: 72-cubic-inch ohv air-cooled opposed four cylinder (equipped with Okrasa heads and dual manifolds)
 Compression Ratio: 7.5-to-1 (stock 6.6-to-1)
 Horsepower: not rated (stock 36 @ 3700 rpm)
 Dimensions: Length 160 inches, width 60.6, height 59, tread 50.8 front and 49.2 rear
 Curb Weight: 1600 lbs.
 Transmission: conventional four-speed (synchromesh in upper three gears)
 *Acceleration: Okrasa test car—0-30 mph 5.7 seconds, 0-45 mph 10.2 and 0-60 mph 18.7
 Gas Mileage: 32 mpg average
 Speedometer Corrections: indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph are actual 30, 45 and 59, respectively
 *For comparison, normal times for VW without special engine equipment are: 0-30 mph 6.9 seconds, 0-45 mph 14.5 and 0-60 mph in 28 seconds.

