

MOTOR CARAVAN

Volkswagen Devon Eurovette

Comfort, quality ~ but short on space

by Chris Goffey

THE MOTOR caravan conversion of the Volkswagen van is one of the best known - and most sought after - conversions on the market. The combination of quite exceptional ride comfort and ease of control, allied to the Volkswagen reputation for mechanical reliability swings many buyers towards it.

However, the Volkswagen has several major detractors over more normal van conversions. Because of the engine position, the rear door and unobstructed working space available in the back of conventional vans are lost, and a far bigger proportion of potential living, eating and sleeping space is sacrificed to driving and mechanical compartments in the VW than in comparable vehicles. The rear-engine layout means that the VW has to have a central sliding door, and in the version we tried, Volkswagen's own conversion called the Eurovette,

this sliding door could not be opened easily when the cooker was opened up. The door also needed a heavy push to close it properly, and this invariably awakened sleeping children in the evening.

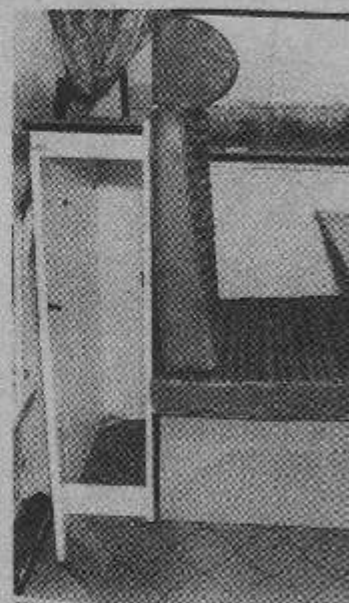
Everything seems so much more cramped in the Volkswagen, and as the cooking and preparing of a meal has to take place in the centre of the van, rather than down in the back end of it, it is easy for tempers to fray when children or other occupants want to climb in and out. The available cupboard space is also curtailed by the rear-engine layout.

Accommodation in the Eurovette consists of two front seats, the driver's being adjustable for rake and fore and aft adjustment, separated by a storage box covered with two loose cushions. At first glance it would appear that this could be used as a

child's seat, but in fact the backrest cushion is just stood in place and there is nothing to support it. A steel rail however, hoops over it, and we found this convenient for anchoring the straps of a child safety seat. The front seats are finished in a woven plastic material which proved comfortable and cool. The driving position is good, and the really excellent ride of the vehicle contributes to a high degree of driver comfort over long distances.

In front of the passenger is a commodious locker that is not equipped with a lockable lid. Behind the front seats is the cooker on one side, and a rear facing single seat on the other. This rear facing seat is quite comfortable with a built-in head rest, but is rather upright for long journeys. It was in fact more comfortable if one erected the table and leant forward on

that. The cooker is incorporated into a cupboard unit, and the whole thing pivots to swing right outside the van and lock in position if required (see photograph). It has a complicated hood that erects to provide a plate warming rack and wind shield, but this hood is made of highly polished stainless steel that tends to become dirty very quickly, and to rattle if not secured properly. The vinyl-covered lid which covers the hood when folded down can be slotted in place between the cooker and the seat to form a working surface when the cooker is swung out on its hinges. The cooker features two hotplates and a grill, a full oven type is not available. The single gas bottle is housed in a cupboard under the cooker, and takes up a substantial amount of useful storage space. It would have been more useful to have designed a better stowage for



Above: The tiny wardrobe and rear facing seat

Left: The VW is unrivalled for its long distance ride comfort

the gas bottles, possibly in a cradle under the van. The table in the centre of the van can be erected inside the van on one leg and two slide fixtures on the side of the van, or can be put up free standing outside on four screw-in legs. If the occupants want to travel without the table, it stows between the single seat and the side of the van, where it tends to rattle unless properly wedged.

The main seats face forward behind the table and are most comfortable to travel on, being well cushioned and set at the right angle of recline. Alongside the double seat is the sink, a cool cupboard, water reservoir, draining board and cutlery rack. Behind the back seat is a large flat platform over the engine, covered with a single cushion, which proved ideal for carrying small children in complete safety, main bed linen, and coats and gumboots. A lift-up rear door provides access to this rear space.

In sleeping configuration, the main seat folds down level with the rear platform to form a generous and comfortable main bed over 6ft 5in. long and 3ft 10in. wide. Two long, but of necessity narrow, hammocks swing out from the sides of the roof. However, with young children, it is obviously not possible to put them to bed in the roof bunks and then to carry on eating and conversing in the main body of the van, and we discovered that by improvising with cushions and the table top we could rig up an effective child's bed in the front of the vehicle and then screen it off from the rest of the van with a blanket.

There is a large storage box under the main seat, and another under the individual seat. A

further storage cupboard is located in the back of the roof above the rear engine area. However, there is not quite enough storage space for comfort, and the apology for a wardrobe behind the individual inside seat is absurd. Such clothes as one can force in through the narrow door tend to snag and tear on the sharp hinges and door latches, and there is not anything like an adequate drop to allow them to hang properly.

Driving the vehicle is a pleasure. While the performance is not exactly overwhelming, the Volkswagen is no sluggard away from the lights, and it can more than hold its own in quite fast moving traffic streams. It will cruise happily all day at 65 to 70 mph, and the big wheels and good ground clearance mean that it is not deterred by really rough going in the exploration of "wild and woolly" hinterlands. The steering is light and precise, the controls have a feeling of being well-engineered and durable, and the brakes are light and powerful. The hand-brake holds the van on the steepest of slopes and the gear-change, although having a long travel across the gate, is precise and light. On radial-ply tyres and with the new 5½J wheel rims, roadholding is good, although the front wheels can break away on wet roads when travelling really quickly. The rear-engine layout, and the amount of weight on the back of the vehicle makes it rather susceptible to side winds, especially on motorways where it tends to get blown around rather a lot.

When in sleeping configuration the curtains are pulled round the vehicle from their retaining straps. Unfortunately, such is the grip of the pop

fasteners, we found several of the strips tearing rather than opening when one went to shut the curtains. The curtains themselves have their edges trimmed in Velcro, so there is no possibility of any chinks being left.

The Volkswagen is a well engineered and comfortable caravan for two. For more than that number, however, space gets a little cramped when it is compared to other vans in the range. □

Performance and data

Motor caravan conversion of the Volkswagen Kombi

PRICES (including VAT) £2,101.12

EXTRAS

1,800 c.c. engine pack (includes servo brakes and radial tyres) £174.05
"Motant" auxiliary tent to fit side of van £81.25

ACCELERATION

0 to 30 mph	7.0 sec
0 to 40 mph	12.5 sec
0 to 50 mph	19.8 sec
0 to 60 mph	35.5 sec
Standing quarter-mile	25.7 sec
Standing km	44.0 sec
In top gear:	
20 to 40 mph	17.4 sec
30 to 60 mph	19.1 sec
40 to 60 mph	28.7 sec

MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS

	mph
Top (mean)	74
(best)	76
3rd	54
2nd	32
1st	16

WEIGHT

With full water tank/containers (4 gals) and half-full fuel tank, 28.8 cwt (3,234lb)
Distribution, per cent: F, 44; R, 56.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Overall, for 1,047 miles.....21.3 mpg
Typical consumption.....23.0 mpg
Grade three star (91 octane RM)

BRAKES (from 30 mph in neutral)

Load	g	Distance
20lb	0-10	300ft
40lb	0-22	137ft
60lb	0-37	81ft
80lb	0-47	64ft
100lb	0-57	53ft
120lb	0-68	44ft
140lb	0-79	36ft
180lb	0-93	32.5ft
Handbrake	0-34	89ft

DIMENSIONS

Height, exterior, roof down.....6ft 8 in.
Headroom, roof up (max).....6ft 1 in.
Width.....5ft 4 in.
Length (incl. step).....14ft 8 in.
Beds: Main.....6ft 5½ in. x 3ft 9½ in.
Transverse/subsidiary 6ft 3 in. x 1ft 10½ in.
(wide end)
1ft 5 in. (narrow end)

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Cylinders.....4
Bore.....93mm (3.66 in.)
Stroke.....66mm (2.59 in.)
Capacity.....1,795 c.c. (109.8 cu. in.)
Compression ratio.....7.3 to 1
Maximum power
68 (net) bhp at 4,200 rpm
Maximum torque
95.5 (net) lb. ft. at 3,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Gear ratios:
Top.....0.89
3rd.....1.26
2nd.....2.06
1st.....3.80
Reverse.....3.80
Final drive: Hypoid bevel, 4.857 to 1
Mph per 1,000 rpm: Top 16.7, 3rd 11.8, 2nd 7.2, 1st 3.8.

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent with torsion bar, trailing link and anti-roll bar
Rear: Independent on 3-point mounting with double joint axles

BRAKES

Dimensions:
F, 10.94 in. dia. discs, 14mm thick pads
R, 9.9 in. dia., 55mm wide shoes

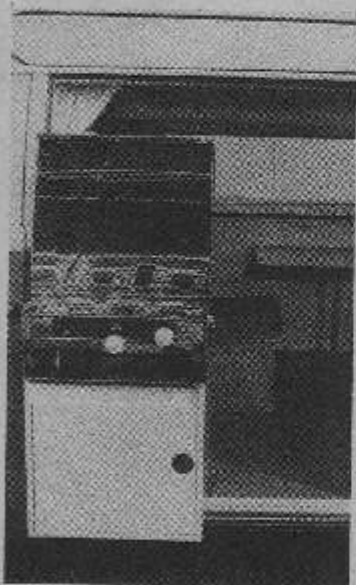
BATTERY

12-volt 45 amp hr negative earth

TYRES

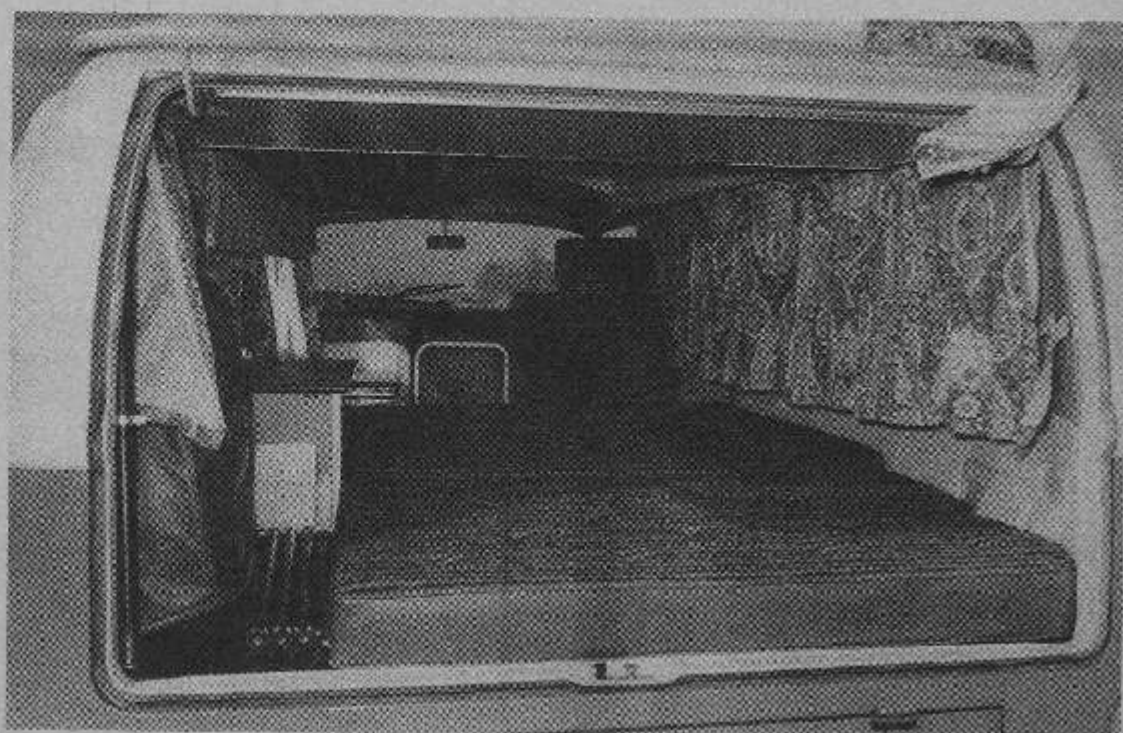
175-SR-14 in. radial/tubeless
Normal pressures: F, 30; R, 44 psi

FUEL TANK Capacity 12.4 Imp gallons (56 litres)



Above: The cooker can be swung right out of the van—but don't try to cook in a breeze

Right: The vast main bed space with one of the bunks in place above



VW Small adverts from AutoCar 3 August 1974

VOLKSWAGEN

CHOBHAM RD. GARAGE, Chobham Rd., Sunningdale, Berks. Phone Ascot (0990) 21582. (AC1438)

S.W.7. V. AND F. MONACO MOTORS. VW sales, service and spares. 6 Astwood Mews, Courtfield Rd., S.W.1. Phone, 01-370 2992. (AC4076/R)

HOLLIS MOTORS for Volkswagen in Kent. Large stocks all models, caravans, etc., available. Buckland, Dover, Kent. Phone, Dover (0304) 206710. (A1601)

COLBORNE GARAGES LTD. (the Volkswagen Centre), Surrey and Kent, for all inquiries. Canterbury (Kent) 710240 or 710544, and Ripley (Surrey) 2361 or 3624. (AC1164/R)

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(AR0051)

AUTOSLEEPERS LTD., Willersey, nr. Broadway, Worcestershire. Manufacturers of Luxury Motor Caravans. Phone 038-981 3338. (AC2031)

NEW MOTOR CARAVANS

VOLKSWAGEN motor caravans, new and second-hand, immediate delivery. Chobham Rd. Garage, Chobham Rd., Sunningdale, Berks. Phone, Ascot (0990) 21582. (AC1438)

FORD motorised caravans available from stock and fast delivery. Contact Brew Brothers Ltd., Ford Distributors, 133 Old Brompton Rd., S.W.7, Phone 01-373 3333. (A2666)

USED MOTOR CARAVANS

MOTOR caravans—left-hand drive Ford Autobomes on German chassis, low mileage, fitted mains electric pick-up, 12V/240/Gaz fridge. German cost £3,200, from £1,500, choice of 50. Also 500 other motor caravans for sale at bargain prices. A further 150 brand new motor caravans in stock at massive discount prices.
STEVENS GARAGE, 94 High St., Hampton Hill, Middx. Phone 01-977 2317. Open 7 days a week. (AC4947/R)