

Volkswagen Audi CAR



91.9mpg POLO



CORRADO: NOW A CLASSIC

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Faster than *the wind*



Peter Noad looks back at the all-too-brief history of the Corrado, already considered a classic and yet to be surpassed

MODEL HISTORY

WAS the Corrado the best car that Volkswagen ever produced? There are many who think so. It certainly gets a lot of votes for its looks, handling and, in G60 and VR6 form, its performance. The Corrado regularly featured in independent motoring magazine group tests of contemporary sports coupés, and it won nearly all of them.

When it was unveiled in Europe in the summer of 1988, the Corrado was described as 'the fastest and most exciting Volkswagen to date', a title previously held by the Scirocco, a car named after a hot wind that blows from the North African desert. Breaking with tradition, the name Corrado was taken from a Spanish word: *correr*, meaning runner, as in athlete.

The Corrado went on sale in Britain in May 1989, but only with the 1.8-litre 16V engine, at a price of £16,699. The G60 was available with left-hand drive, but right-hand-drive examples did not arrive until the end of 1991.

With the 136bhp 16V engine, the 'fastest Volkswagen' claim was questionable. Thanks to its 0.32 drag coefficient, the Corrado was ahead on top speed (2mph faster than the Scirocco GTX 16V), but the new coupé's weight of 1100kg meant that it lagged behind the similarly-powered Golf and Scirocco on acceleration times. But there was no disputing the claim with respect to the G60 and VR6.

Although the Corrado was widely regarded as a replacement for the Scirocco, the latter was available for a further three years. During this time, Volkswagen had two similarly-sized sports coupés in the range, with only a small difference in performance but a huge difference in price: the Scirocco Scala Injection was £5000 cheaper than the Corrado 16V. Nevertheless, there was a strong demand for the Corrado in Britain, where many customers signed up in advance of the first delivery, and the quota was sold out before the year's end.

There was no new technology in the Corrado's suspension, basically comprising Golf and Passat components, but the car's sharp handling and ultra-responsive steering set new standards for front-wheel drive and prompted high praise from all who drove it. The Corrado seemed to need less steering input than most cars for a given manoeuvre; it had exceptionally good 'swervability' and was very quick through S-bends and tight corners.

All Corrados had 15in. wheels and disc brakes all round, with big 28mm vented discs at the front on the more powerful models. Power steering, sports seats, electric mirrors, foglamps and an MFA trip computer were standard, as was a split-folding rear seat with a novel forward-hinged central armrest, inside which a first-aid kit could be stored.



Rear spoiler extended at speed to aid stability.

Another novelty was the rear spoiler: electrically operated to extend automatically above 45mph, it reduced the aerodynamic lift at the rear by 64 per cent. By retracting at low speed, it did not impair rearward vision when parking, although it could be extended at any time by pressing a switch.

The Corrado was much the same length as the Scirocco, so the boot was no bigger and rear legroom was hardly any greater, although it did offer a little more headroom and shoulder room.

The fascia, switchgear and rather bland-looking steering wheel came from the Passat. The wheel was height-adjustable on most models, but the Corrado really deserved a more exclusive steering wheel



LEFT: Leather was a popular option, standard on the Storm.

BELOW LEFT: Boot was not as big as the Scirocco's.



with a more sporty feel. The seats, with tilting height adjustment, were well shaped and gave adequate support during enthusiastic cornering.

The G60 was powered by a 1.8-litre eight-valve engine with Volkswagen's G-shaped supercharger, which gave 0.65 bar boost. With an intercooler, fully-electronic management system and a catalyst, it developed 160bhp at 5600rpm and

was renowned for its mid-range torque, which gave rapid 50-70mph acceleration times. Indeed, the G60 was quicker over this increment than a modified 2.0-litre 16V or a VR6, both with an additional 30bhp.

When it became available with right-hand drive, the Corrado G60 cost £18,851 and came with a specification which included BBS wheels with 195/50-15

tyres, and ABS. By then, both the 16V and G60 had electric windows and a sunroof.

The 16V was given the 2.0-litre catalyst engine but, curiously, it produced only 136bhp, not 150bhp as in the Golf. A 115bhp 8V model was added at the bottom of the range, but we described it as a 'ghost' car — it was on the price list, at £16,348 in 1994, but rarely seen.

In 1992, barely a year after its introduction in right-hand-drive form, the charismatic G60 was discontinued and replaced by the silky-smooth VR6. The Corrado's VR6 was larger and more powerful than that in the Golf and Passat, the coupé having 2.9 litres and 190bhp while the saloons had 2.8 litres and 174bhp. The six-cylinder Corrado was equipped with traction control and came fitted with 205/50 tyres on its 6.5x15 Speedline five-spoke wheels.

Switches and heater controls were revised and the Passat steering wheel was replaced by the somewhat sportier and more distinctive three-spoke wheel from the Polo G40, leather-covered on the VR6.

Our road test credited the 16V with a 0-60 mph time of 8.2 seconds, a maximum speed of 132mph and an overall fuel consumption of 35.7mpg, whereas the G60 did 0-60 in 7.5 seconds, had a top speed of 140mph and averaged 30.8mpg. The VR6 was the fastest and thirstiest: 0-60 in 6.3 seconds and 146mph, but only 23.4mpg.

With the VR6 engine, the Corrado was a driver's delight. Its dynamics were

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outstanding; it had tremendous performance, with handling and brakes to match. Five years on, the Audi TT, with 225bhp and four-wheel drive, is only 0.1 of a second quicker from 0 to 60, and the Corrado is actually quicker than the TT from 0 to 70!

The Corrado's build quality was first class; it felt much more solid than a Scirocco and was considerably heavier. The styling was particularly successful, combining a hint of the series I Scirocco at the rear with a chisel-like front to give a purposeful and distinctive, yet attractive, shape. The big, rectangular headlamps and foglamps looked functional and performed well.

The Corrado sold well in Britain, but, apparently, not well enough elsewhere and it was phased out in 1995. By then, the cost of the VR6 had risen to £21,199, over £3000 more than the Golf VR6. The price of the Corrado 16V at that time was £18,499.

To mark the end of production, and its success in Britain, Volkswagen produced a limited edition Corrado Storm: a VR6 with heated leather seats and special pearl-effect paintwork. The list price was £22,499, although, a year later, second-



VR6 engine gave the Corrado the power it needed.

hand Storms were fetching £23,995!

Until a true successor materialises, the Corrado looks set to retain its title as the best car that Volkswagen has ever pro-

duced. It is already acknowledged as a future classic and is likely to command high secondhand values for a long time to come. ■

