



IRIODIN IS WIZARD

Rainer Buchmann, he of Targa Turbo, CW 311 and Targa 928 fame, turns his company's attention away from cosmetic paintwork to produce b + b's electronic extravaganza

AUTOMOBILE ELECTRONICS is one of those handy phrases which can mean anything from a quartz clock to... well, to the b+b VW Golf cabrio called Iriodin which carries close to £2000 worth of digital wizardry and another £700-800 worth of radios, seat adjusters and future-generation ALI route advisory panels. Not to mention 18 loudspeakers to spread the sound around.

Rainer Buchmann who is b + b has always been the man for far-out concepts. It began with his custom Porsche Turbo Targas, progressed to the Mercedes-based CW 311 road-racer and will soon surface in a motorcycle called Futura. Along the way he has promoted high-class car sound at every opportunity. Casting around for a new field of the future

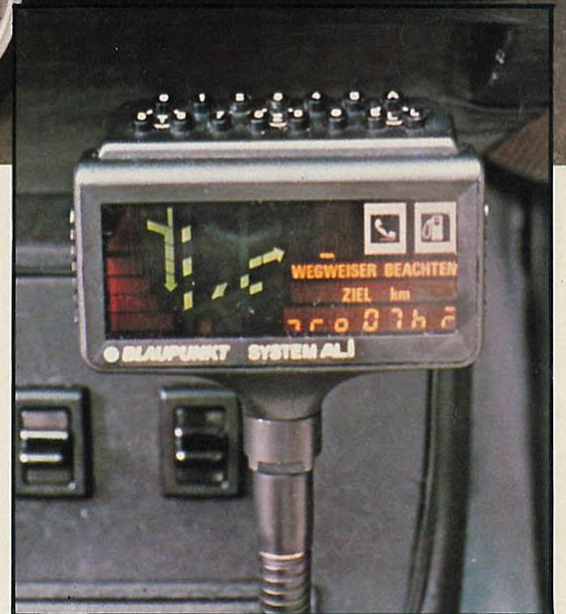
he found electronics, a way to take b+b out of the fancy paint and stripes realm and into the position of think tank to the motor industry.

Characteristically he bought the services of best man available for this task, an escapee from the German space research programme who combines programme preparation and technological limit-seeking in one mind. Their first display product is the Golf shown here. Incidentally, the set of ten such cars also comes with new wing flares and spoilers from BBS of mag wheel fame—those will be offered separately quite soon.

The Recaro seats with electric adjustment plus Keiper memory for the driver's seat which allows you to pre-select three positions and recall them without fiddle are all on the

Above: nose air-dam and flared arches hint at a rather different temperament...

Right: Blaupunkt's ALI route guide display in what b+b calls 'modest black and white'



market now.

These weren't the features which prompted Wolfsburg to practically dismantle one of these b+b Golfs at their Geneva Show debut, or to take a pair of ten back home for future study. Big men in VW engineering and common fans alike are really hooked on the combination of computer and digital dash which *Motor* tried almost before all the wires were tucked out of sight.

Straight ahead of a driver, in an adapted Jetta module, b+b places large digital readouts for engine revs and speed, plus rows of red dots which light up progressively as either function increases. Comment: I'd settle for the red dots and maybe the rpm digits. But speed numbers which flicker constantly are only distracting. Buchmann's

answer: it would be easy to programme the readout so it changed in 1 mph increments at slow speeds, then in 5 or 10 mph units as speed increased.

Overall mileage, trip-odometer and choice of oil or water data are shown on the main face below the big digits, with a label to tell you what is being presented.

In the centre console you find a panel of buttons including those to restart a cycle and one to choose between the two sets of data so that readouts on the adjoining digital face are twice-10 buttons. Depending on which set you choose there will be labels for each button in yellow or red plus a label under the figure, on the face.

The b+b speciality is to retain all data since the system was last reset

Cabby.info.com

Continued over

to zero, but not to inflict it on a driver until he calls for instantaneous consumption, for instance, or consumption since the programme began, or choice of inside or outside temperature, et cetera. Turning the engine off does not cancel any data except the 0-60 acceleration time which starts fresh from each full halt.

However, when the engine is turned on again the readout automatically reverts to time-of-day and you have to punch for all those other figures. Secondly, when the fuel falls to low levels a reserve warning with litres (or gallons) left overrides other functions. If tank sensors were as accurate as micro-chip electronics this would be fine. As it is, low fuel shoulders aside other, more urgently wanted data, due to petrol surge, when the tank is still quarter full.

There is a problem with light levels too. Sunlight over either shoulder wipes out the digits - which couldn't be any brighter or they would blind you at night. A dimmer is contemplated. And no matter

which functions a computer man likes on his pet display, some driver will want one from a different car's lineup.

Buchmann contemplates acoustic warnings as the next in-car step, within 2-3 years, but a set each driver could encode for himself might be even further out.

The current setup - reputedly with new non-reflecting foil which doesn't block the figures for certain heights of driver - will be offered as a direct b+b installation for GTi Golfs only by the end of this year, with a kit at perhaps half the price to follow and a simplified, cheaper version (probably using only one face) contemplated when they have more driver feedback on needs and wants.

b + b set out to push the limits, not to insist they had discovered the final grail. Along the way they left me wondering if the day might come when we would buy such cars to enjoy the surroundings - even if we weren't allowed to drive them much.



Left: centre console shows time in this shot. Nine functions can be monitored and displayed



Left: main instrument panel is all-digital here showing 1,000 rpm at 0 mph



Left: Recaro seats are electrically adjustable (the driver's has a memory) while eighteen - yes 18 - speakers cater for stereo buffs