

Open for business



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The editor meets a man after his own heart, with one of the nicest Cabriolet Golfs money can buy

AND I THOUGHT I had the best job in the world. That was until I met a chap called Rod Edwards.

Rod is a photographer, like me, and passionate about VWs, like me. He has a gorgeous GTI Cabriolet that is so nice, I whinny like a horse whenever I see it driving down the street. Which is most unlike me.

The Golf has been in Rod's hands for three years, and in that time he's looked after it like only a photographer can. It is meticulous in its preparation and looks superb in its original glossy black paintwork. Rod loves the car, and freely admits to spending far too much time messing about with it.

"It's something about the shape, I think," he reasons. "The Mk1 lines are very pure, and I've always loved open top cars, so when I had enough money together to invest in a car I knew exactly what I wanted: a Mk1 Golf GTI Cabriolet."

Rod was painstaking in his research, and set out to find a GTI Cabriolet, with Scala wheels and electric hood. "I wasn't interested in the cheaper Clippers or alternatives, it had to be this one."

Expecting a long and drawn out search for the car of his dreams, Rod was rubbing his eyes in disbelief when the first one he saw turned out to be the one he eventually bought.

"They always say never buy the first car you see," he laughs, "But in this case I just knew I wasn't going to find anything better. I travelled a long way to see it, and when I got there the car was perfect in every detail except for a slightly leaking hood and water stains on the seats. A little elbow grease would soon clean the seats up and the hood has been treated with special waterproof coating to keep the rain off. I need to get the seals replaced at some point in the near future but apart from that it's totally original and totally standard."

Rod's Golf is the much sought after Golf GTI Cabriolet, and comes with an electrically-powered hood, 15in colour-coded Scala alloys and a white interior. It's been looked after, as a stamped-up service history shows, and Rod has kept every single receipt.

"I'm a bit of a perfectionist," he admits, "and as a photographer it's a bit of an image thing to have a nice car, so I like to keep it looking good."

The car is used for local mileage only. Anything involving



Interior wearing well after 12 years of use. No sign of fraying seats, though, and squeaks and rattles are few and far between



Two badges that say it all. Karmann have been lifting the lid on VWs since the earliest Beetles, while the Golf GTI is a legend!



The below-average mileage of Rod's Golf is testimony to the years of care lavished on it by previous owners. Just run in!



Scala wheels and (for the Cabriolet) a non-Golfball gearknob are two of this car's distinguishing features. Both items in exceptional condition with little or no wear

long distances is carried out in a much-loved Type 25 camper, already on its second diesel engine. "There's something about Volkswagens that I love," Rod smiles, "and from my own personal experience they are not cheap to run, but are very rewarding to drive."

"The Golf Cabriolet is not the most practical of cars for a photographer as the boot is not a full-sized affair like the standard hatchback GTI. Well, that hood has to go somewhere!

"But as a summer car it is fantastic, although in town the lack of power steering makes it a little more labour-intensive. Just as well I work out really!"

THE GOLF GTI Cabriolet continued a long tradition of open top VWs. The name Karmann is familiar to Volkswagen owners the world over, as the company has been lifting the lid on all manner of VWs since the Beetle. It is perhaps the Golf, though, for which the watercooled generation best-



The detailing on Rod's car is excellent. No customised tomfoolery round here!

remember Karmann's influence. "I think the company did a great job with the Mk1," Rod reckons. "It's a perfect styling job. It still looks like a Mk1 GTI but with the open top roof it's a lot trendier!" The Cabriolet's rear end stays faithful to designer Guigliaro's original concept. The main changes are to the small tail-lamp clusters and top hinged boot, which is squared off to keep the car's proportions just right. "I can't

think of another open-top sporty car that looks better," Rod smiles. Early Cabriolets had manually-operated soft-tops, made in much the same way as its predecessors. Constructed from a closely-woven mohair exterior, with cloth headlining and 'sandwich' filling, the hoods are more vulnerable to a knife than to the ravages of a British climate. They're worth looking after, as replacements from the factory are as expensive

as the car's secondhand value! The folding soft-top is secured to the top of the windscreen frame with two steel claws that grip the roof onto the frame. In true Volkswagen fashion, the fit is like a glove, and the clamps are well-engineered and totally secure. "I've had the car alarmed and immobilized up to the hilt with a Scorpion system," Rod tells me, "because although I live in a secure area, when I've got camera equipment on board I don't take any chances."

"Actually the boot is more secure for valuables than the traditional hatchback GTI as it's totally enclosed, with no parcel shelf to break open." On the open road, the car is a delightful drive, and the wind-in-the hair adds to the sensation of speed. Although heavier than the tin top GTI, thanks to improved strengthening under the floorpan, the car has lost none of its GTI characteristics and handling, still cocking a rear wheel when cornering hard. Rod loves it.

"The lack of power steering isn't actually a problem at speed, as the steering is perfectly weighted and very positive. I think it's a brilliant car and it's worth every penny. If I was to sell it I'd get back what I paid for it, so it's held onto its value amazingly well, hardly losing money at all. It's worth about £4000."

"But that doesn't mean that it's up for sale," Rod concludes. "Far from it. I'm keeping this car because I see it as an investment. It's special, and I intend to hang onto it. Keeping a classic car like mine as standard is the best way to keep its value up in the long term. And although mine is standard, it's a fun car, and never wipes the smile off my face!"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS
VW Golf GTI Mk1 Cabriolet

Engine: Four-cylinder inline, transversely mounted in front, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injector
 Bore/stroke: 81mm x 86.4mm
 Output: 112bhp @ 5800rpm
 Compression ratio: 10.0:1
 Maximum torque: 109lb ft at 3500rpm
 Transmission: Five speed sports box
 Brakes: Diagonally split dual circuit, ventilated discs in front
 Tyres/wheels: 175/70 HR13 on 5.5J x 13 alloy
 Wheelbase: 2400mm
 Length: 3615mm
 Width: 1626mm
 Height: 394mm
 Unladen weight: 896lbs
 Top speed: 114mph
 Acceleration: 0-60mph in 8.2 secs
 Fuel consumption: Urban cycle 26.8mpg, constant 56mph 47.9mpg, constant 75mph 36.7mpg

