

Ultra VW – The Ultimate VW Magazine!

ULTRA VW

Carson-top hot rod Bug
Home-resto Bay Camper
Split-screen ladder truck
Porsche 356A Outlaw coupé
Empi GTV-style Karmann Ghia

WORLD CLASS CAL LOOK

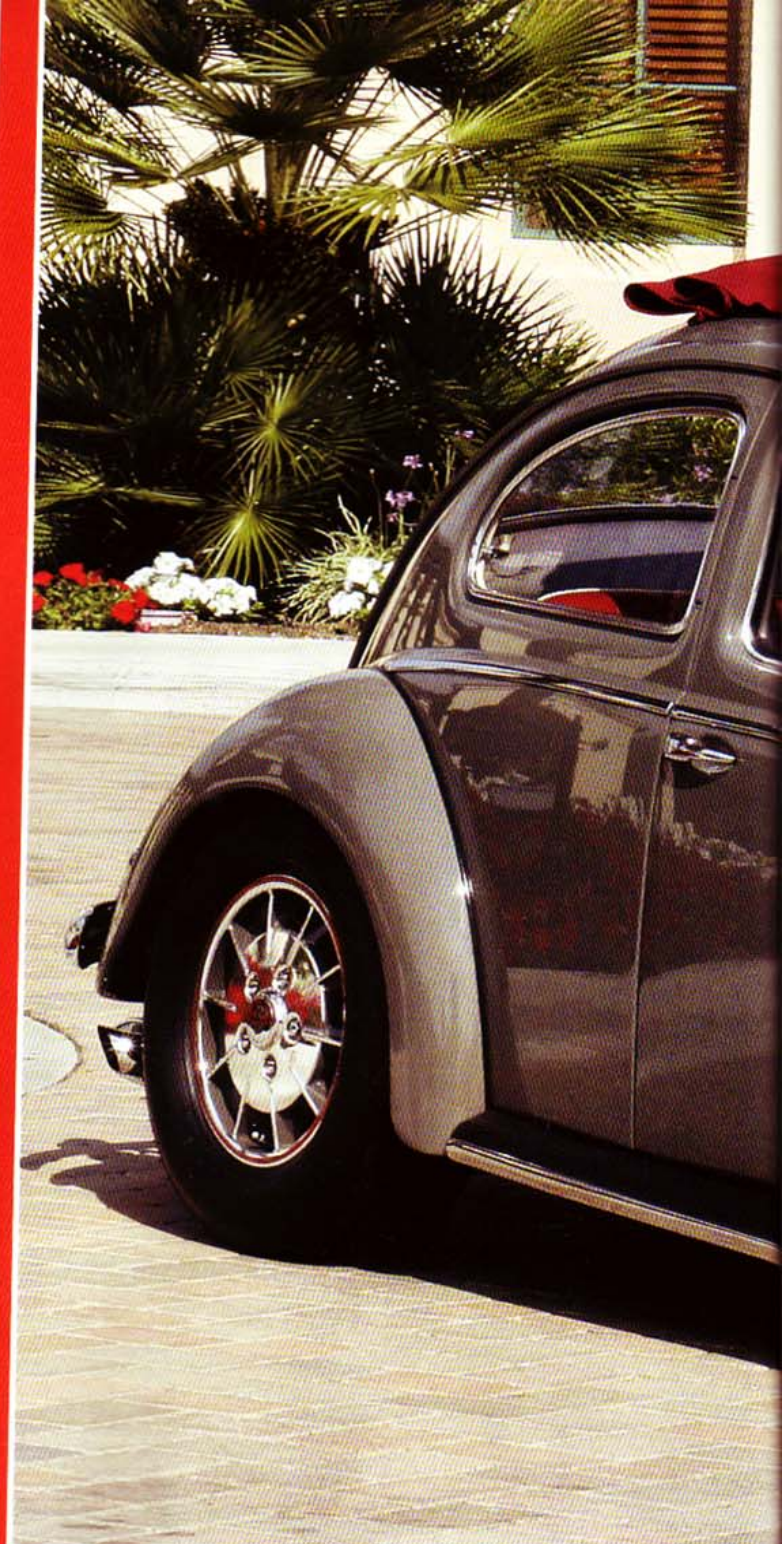
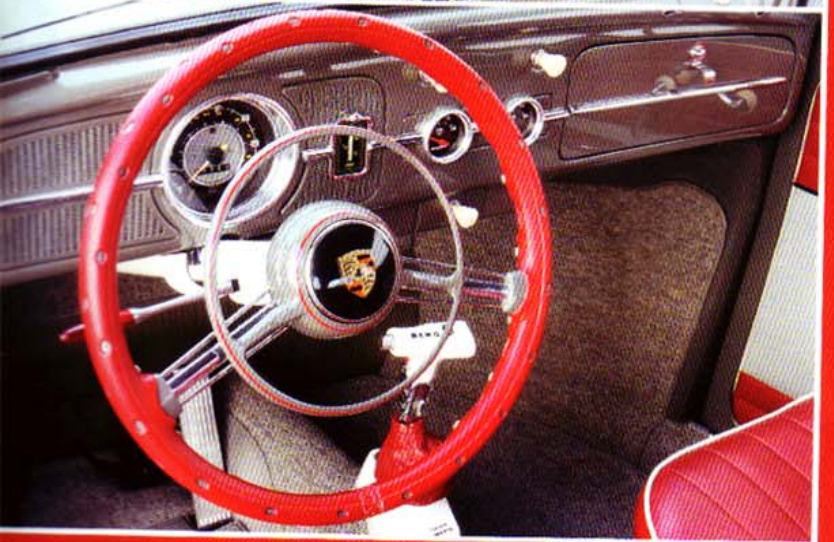
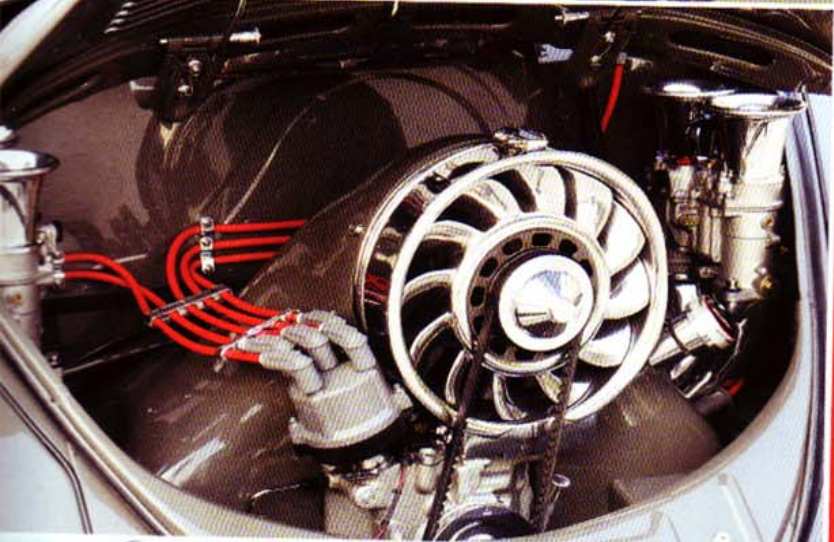


HoodRide



Tech: Removable rear valance **Events:** VW Action; Californian VW Classic; Le Bug Show (Spa); VW Mania

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RAISING THE BAR

A new breed of custom VWs has started to appear in California. To the untrained eye, these may seem like 'just another Vee Dub', due to their lack of obvious body modifications. But, instead, their owners prefer to concentrate on smart and subtle details, akin to the street rod scene. One such car is Darrell Baker's 2.4-litre '58 Ragtop...

Words & Photos: Stephan Szantai



Aron Broughton's green Oval and Randy Gates' blue Split-window, which respectively graced our pages in June 2004 and November 2005, can be considered as icons of the movement in custom VWs. These cars do not have radical top chops, trick suicide doors or modified wings – not that there's anything wrong with these modifications – as the above-mentioned enthusiasts chose different routes... What's the big deal? Well, apart from the surrounding overall finish and serious horsepower, these vintage VWs hide a lot of subtle custom-fabricated details,

including one-off gauge holders, unique bumper treatments and specially-machined brackets. In essence, this is what happens when the California Look meets the street rod world!

This latest incarnation of such hi-po beasts belongs to Darrell Baker, of San Clemente, in SoCal. A long-time Volkswagen enthusiast, he has owned numerous air-cooled toys over the years, including a '56 Cabriolet, a '58 Samba and a '71 Squareback. He wrenched on a '69 model Beetle, too – this was a graduation present from his parents, which had covered only 50,000 miles from new: 'When rebuilding it, I was quite inspired by Bill Schwimmer's pink

Squareback that hit the scene back in '83. Once completed, my car proved nice enough to be featured in *Hot VWs* in February 1988,' he says.

Darrell also restored a '73 Thing, which made some waves back in 2004. After he parted with it, its new owner put it up for sale at the famous Barrett-Jackson auction, where it sold for an astonishing \$36,000!

This leads us to Darrell's latest Volkswagen, the amazing European '58 sunroof Beetle you're feasting your eyes on. Found on TheSamba.com in January 2002, it had no major dents, zero rust and came complete. Talk about a perfect car! Work began a year later,

when Darrell finally tore the vehicle apart, using among other tools a rare Hazet flat-blade screwdriver found in the glove box. The body ended up at Buddy Hale's shop, T-1 Restorations, in Arizona, where it received a complete make-over after Pro Strip blasted the sheet metal with walnut shells.

Darrell also entrusted the original decklid to another Arizonan resident, Matt Howard, of Deluxe Customs, for him to skilfully work on. It now features convertible vents and graceful protuberances to clear the Berg velocity stacks, along with another set of vents hiding behind the licence plate. Buddy then grabbed the paint gun to apply the L-469 Anthracite Grey VW shade, before Darrell finally colour-sanded and

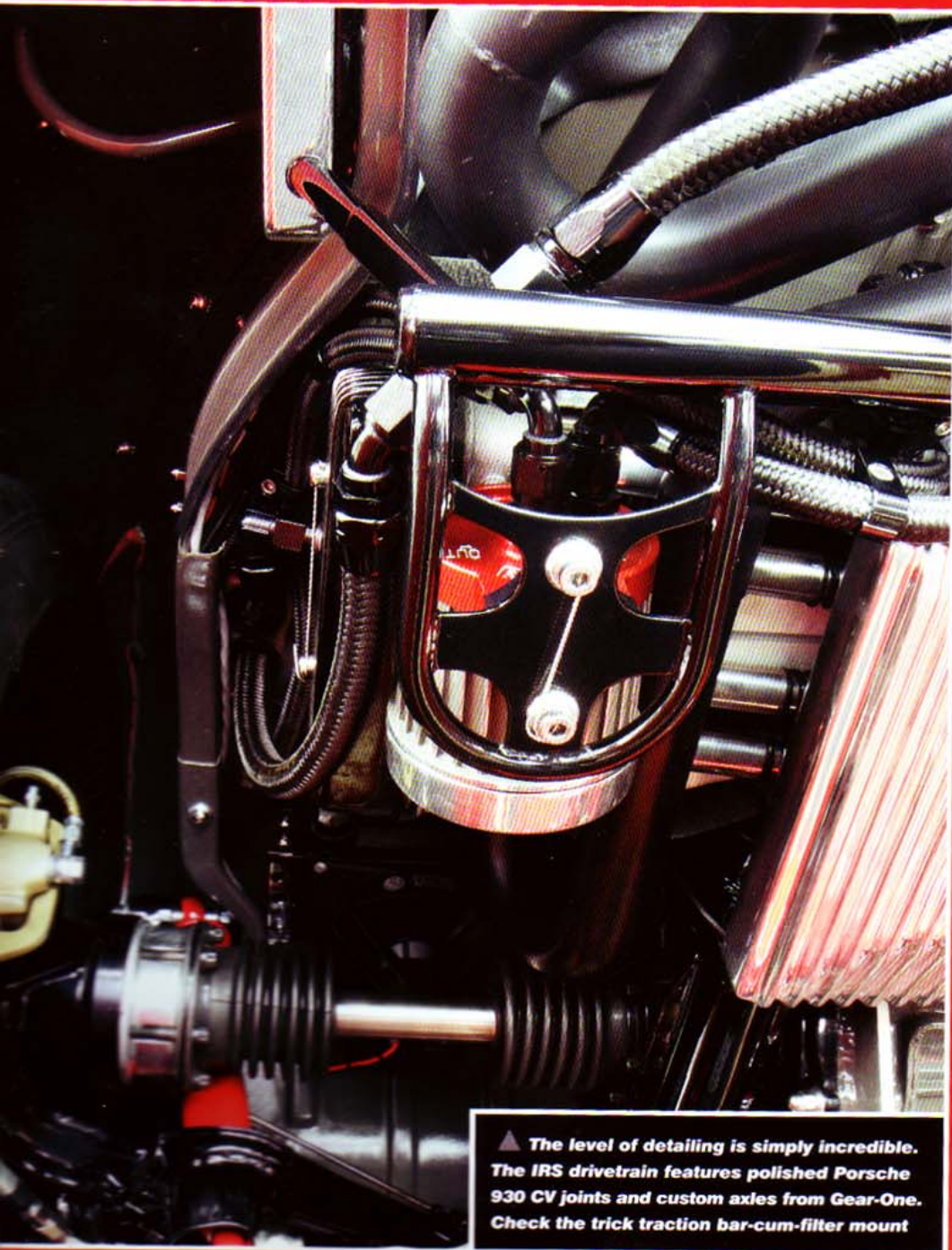
buffed the body to perfection.

The chassis, which was still in great shape, received a bunch of attention. Andy Holder opened up the tunnel to install -6 aluminium fuel lines, together with stainless-steel brake pipes. He subsequently installed IRS Porsche 944 rear trailing arms that had been narrowed by The Butcher Shop. Baer Brakes was put in charge of slotting and cross-drilling the vented CSP front discs, together with Porsche 944 discs at the rear.

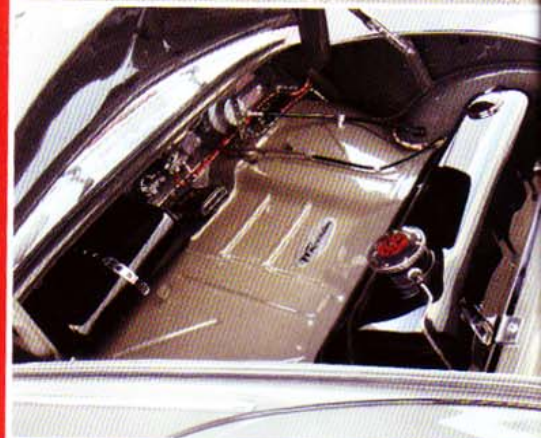
As the two-inch-narrowed CB Performance beam did not give the desired effect, Darrell hacked off another three-quarters-of-an-inch, thus giving the 135R15 Michelin tyres plenty of space. CB Performance dropped spindles

and Koni shocks complement the suspension set-up, which is detailed to the hilt. Wheels are original 5.5Jx15 Porsche Gas Burners, featuring an Enviro-plating finish. This will help the painted and polished rims, prone to oxidation because of their magnesium content, to keep their shine.

Reassembling the '58 involved the use of numerous one-off parts, like the Buddy Hale-fabricated bumper stiffeners and the one-piece bumper brackets built by Troy Smith - these hide the wires from the Hella third brake light, which is fitted above the rear bumper blade. Troy also concocted the aluminium fender beading holders, while Darrell got busy rebuilding the headlights and the sunroof, using



▲ The level of detailing is simply incredible. The IRS drivetrain features polished Porsche 930 CV joints and custom axles from Gear-One. Check the trick traction bar-cum-filter mount



chromed rails for the latter. He installed a variety of NOS goodies along the way, such as a 101 mirror, pop-out windows and threshold plates, in addition to SWF semaphores.

The list of NOS finds filling the cockpit is impressive, too: Hella red-tip turn-signal switch, Dehne fuel gauge and sender unit, '58-'59 sun visor, Cosmic throttle pedal, coat hooks and two-tone grab handle. Always on the lookout for unusual items, Darrell also located a one-year-only VDO speedometer - this is specific to the Australian

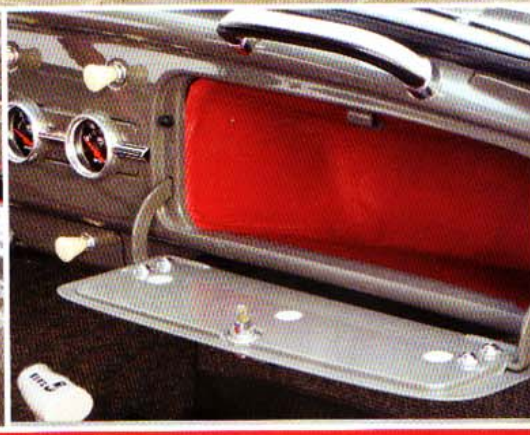
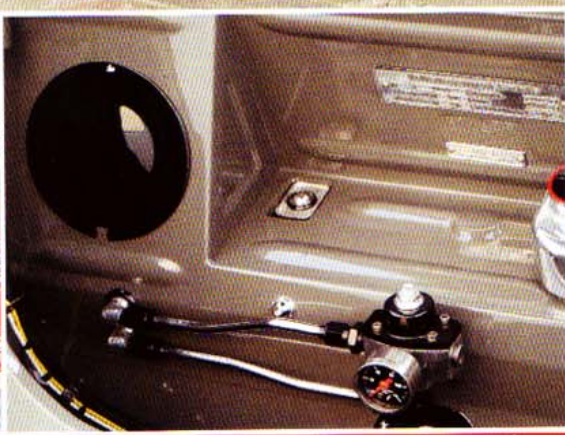
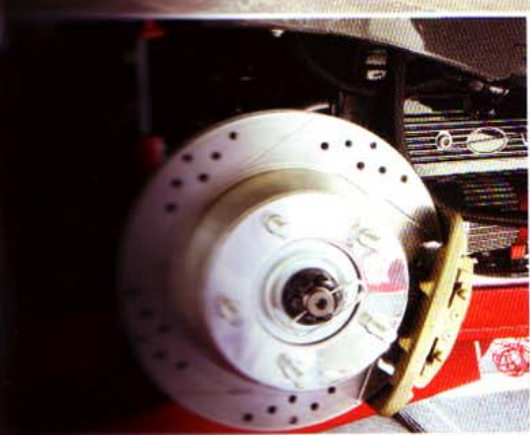
market and features both mph and km/h markings! Yet, one of the coolest details might be the mount for the custom line-lock and shift-light, created by Troy Smith, which bolts next to the rare day/night mirror!

We should also mention the excellent Porsche 356A steering wheel, painted by Buddy and equipped with a VDM full-circle horn ring, as well as the reworked five-speed Berg locking shifter. Now powder-coated, the latter features a line-lock button, plus a leather boot. The latter matches the other upholstery components supplied by West Coast Classic: the hand-brake boot and the

glove box, the Katzkin leather seat covers and vinyl '58-'59-style side panels. Another shop, VIP, based in Phoenix, took care of installing the German square-weave carpet, along with the German cloth headliner.

Finally, a few classic California Look goodies complete this fantastic interior, specifically a pair of AutoMeter gauges (oil pressure and temperature) - that Darrell fitted to a modified radio blanking plate - and four sets of Simpson seat-belts with cam locks. The same attention to detail characterizes the front trunk area which, once again, displays Buddy's workmanship and complements the perfect wiring by Jay Lussier.

Not surprisingly, opening the decklid





▲ Although the ragtop is as clean as they come, Darrell's not afraid to drive it. Check those hand-formed bulges in the decklid, necessary to clear the 48IDAs' velocity stacks



reveals an outstanding powerplant. Assembled by Dan Lawson, at Competition Engineering (aka CE), in Arizona, this 2387cc motor, with a compression ratio of 10:1, delivers 201 horsepower at 6500rpm – with the fan belt on! Speaking of the fan, the efficient 13-blade cooling system with CE pulleys came from a Porsche 993 and incorporates a 115amp alternator. This engine compartment remains a picture of simplicity, especially the colour-matched firewall kit – did you notice the rib

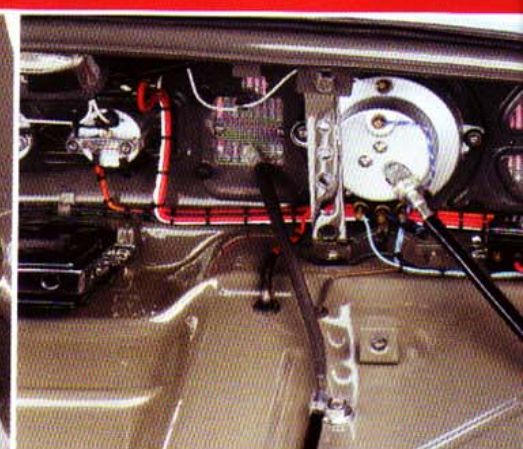
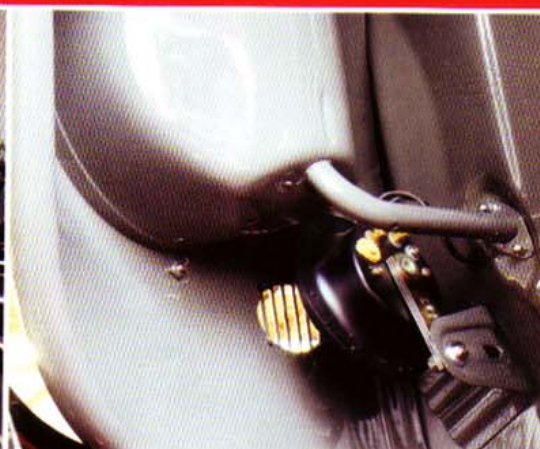
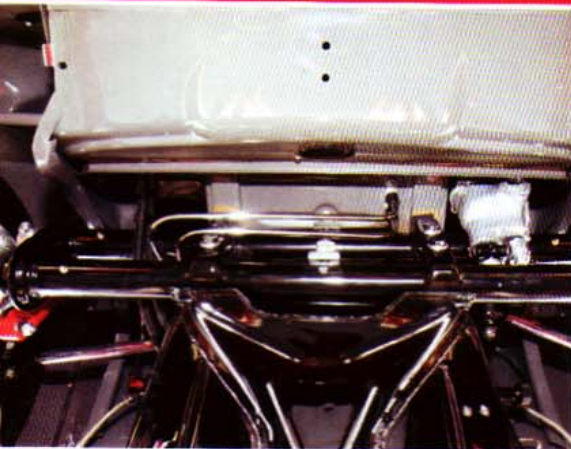
following the contours of the fan shroud on the main panel?

Dan used a variety of Pauter components, like the 86mm crankshaft, 03E8 camshaft and 5.6-inch con-rods, plus 11lb flywheel and 1.4:1 rockers – the latter activate 42x37.5mm stainless-steel valves. Mike Fischer, at CE, reworked, ported and polished the CB 044 heads. The all-important oil system relies on a Revmaster pump with by-pass valve, a custom CE full-flow system, a System 1 oil filter on a

Barnes mount and a Setrab oil cooler, all fed from the Berg 3.5-quart sump.

To complete the Beetle, once again Troy Smith came to the rescue with a handful of one-off items, such as the traction bar and the MSD wire dividers, in addition to the linkage for the Italian 48IDA Weber carbs. All fuel and oil lines were fabricated by Buddy Hale.

KCR assembled a tough IRS transmission, based around a gusseted 1976 case. As the Baker family planned on being able to use the

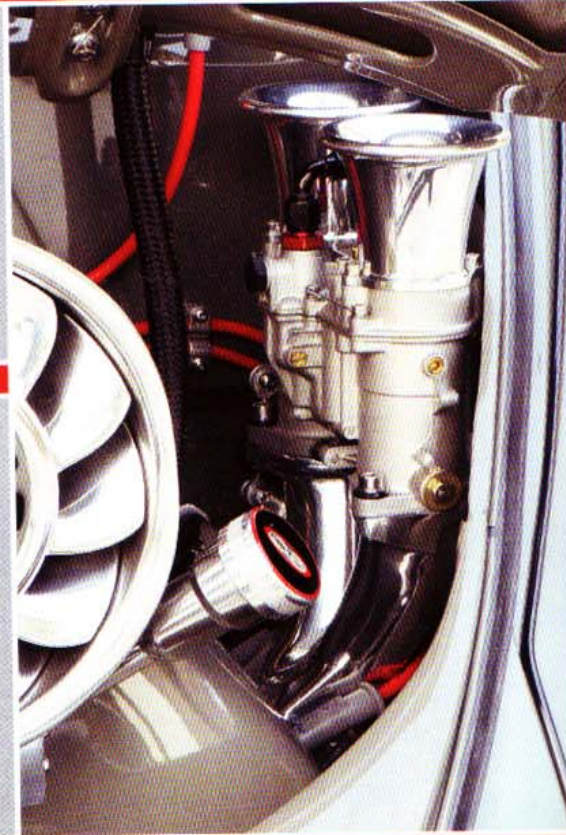




...comfortably both in town and on the highways, a Berg five-speed kit seemed appropriate. Notable hi-po components include 13-spline gears and shafts and a ZF limited-slip differential, along with Gear-One custom axles. The build was completed the installation with modified 930 CV joints, custom urethane bushings and, finally, M&H DOT-approved tires.

The car finally made its first public appearance in June, at the pre-VW Classic DKP

Cruise Night. When the time came to present the DKP Choice Award, the club members found themselves with a conundrum, since their votes were split between four incredible VWs: Darrell's '58 and three rides soon to be featured in *Ultra VW* (Geoff Peterson's Heb rod, Darren Dilley's '55 and Karl Heinlein's turbo Notchback). The verdict? Darrell went home with the trophy! Check out the pictures and, hopefully, you'll agree with us: this Ragtop is simply mind-blowing! ●



technical

Engine:

VW Type 1 2387cc
 86mm wedge-mated Pauter crank
 94mm JE custom pistons/Cima cylinders
 Pauter 03E8 camshaft; 5.6-inch Pauter rods
 42x37.5 CB 044 heads; Weber 48IDA carburetors
 A-1 1.75-inch header, 3-inch Magnaflow muffler
 Built by Dan Lawson at Competition Engineering

Transmission:

VW five-speed IRS
 3.88 ring and pinion; 3.78: 2.31; 1.58; 1.26; 0.89
 Built by KCR Transmissions

