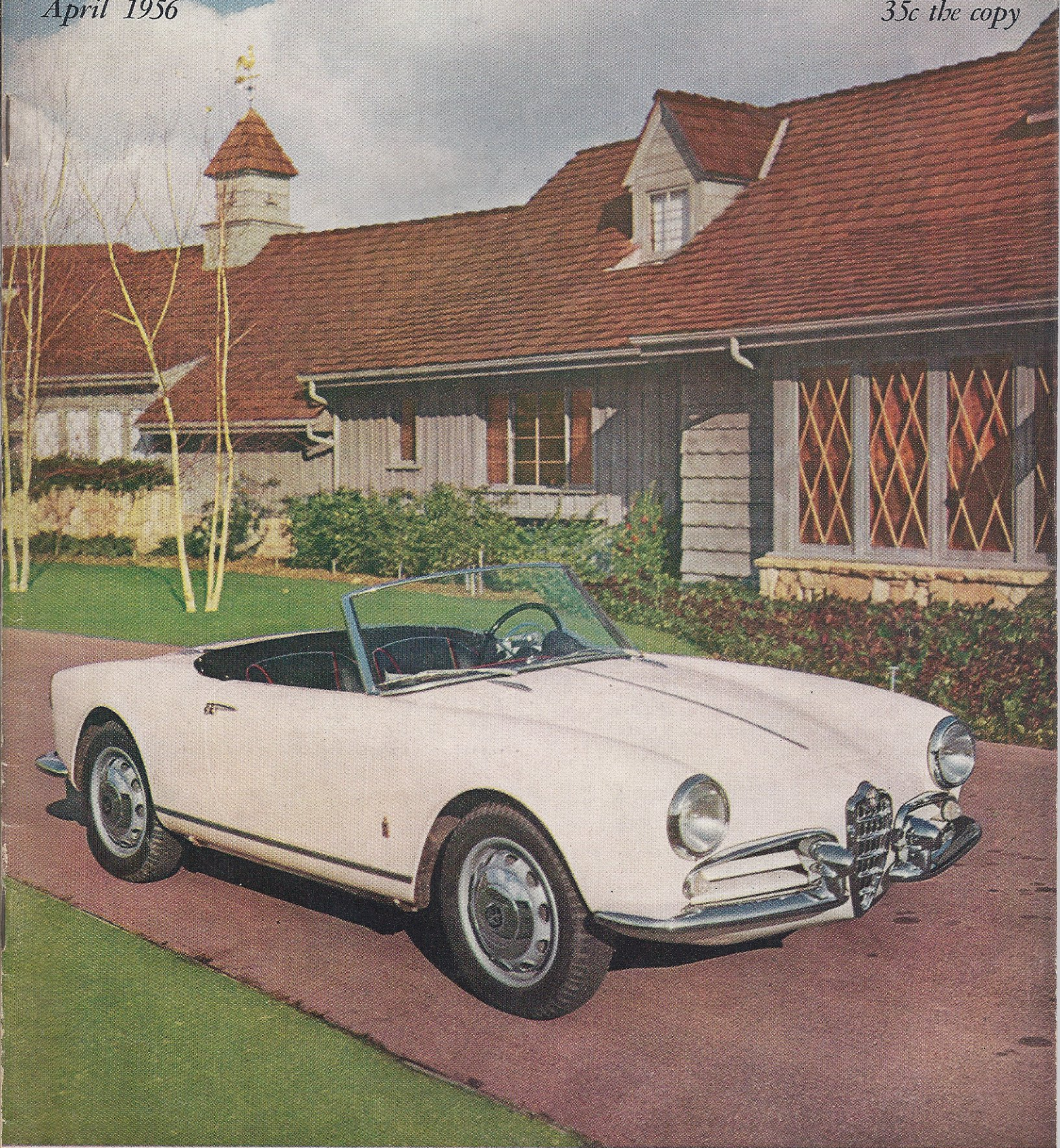


ROAD & TRACK

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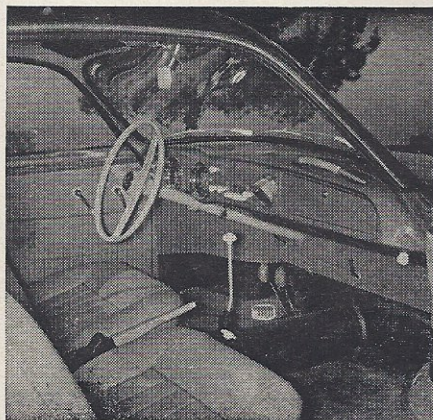
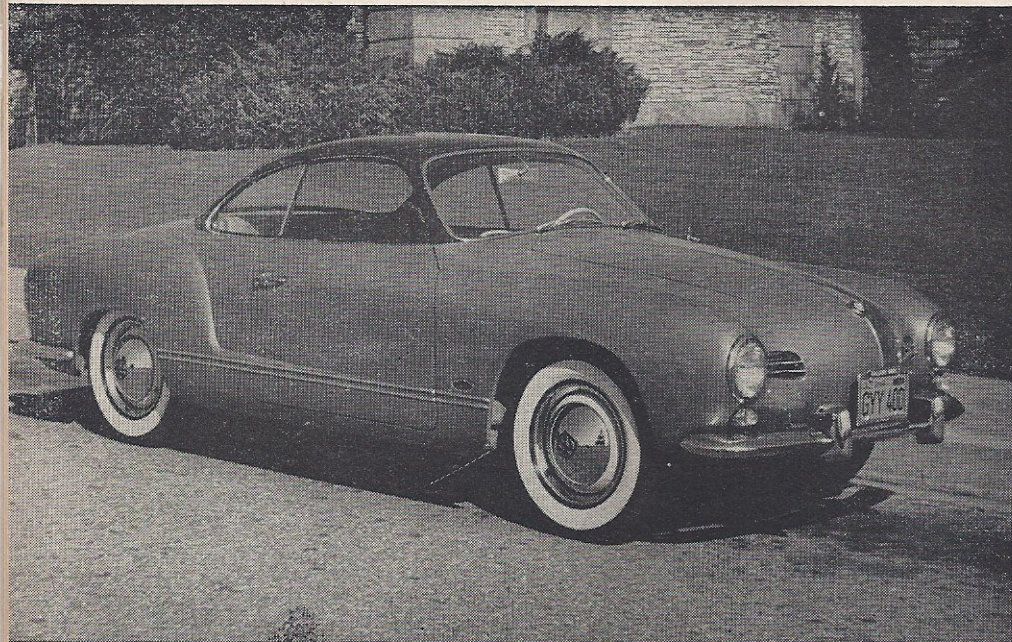


Road Tests:

**ALFA ROMEO SPYDER
VW GHIA-KARMANN**

Competition:

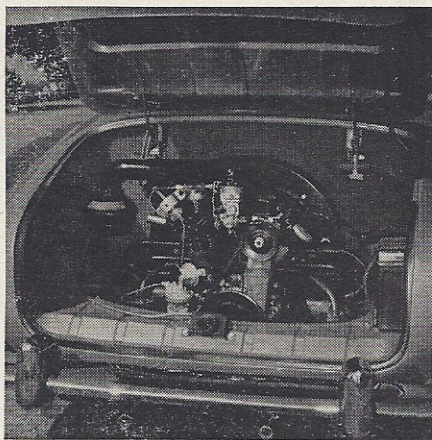
**MONTE CARLO RALLEY
ARGENTINE RACES**



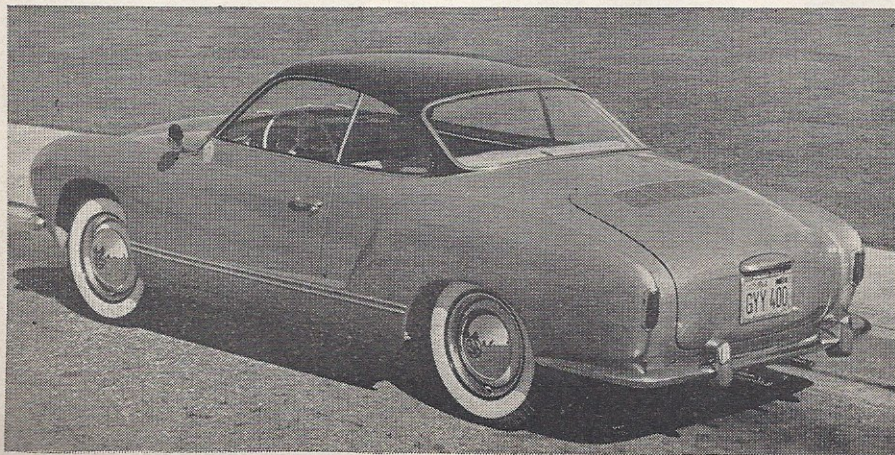
The GHIA-KARMANN

V O L K S W A G E N

photography: Poole



With such a handsomely appointed interior (above), a cigaret still has to be lighted with a match. There is plenty of lateral space for the stock VW engine (right): vertically it's a tight squeeze. From any angle the car is photogenic, but the rear quarter view (below) shows the well-balanced body lines to particularly good advantage.



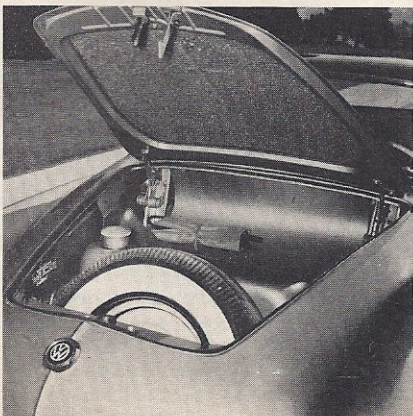
As everybody knows by now, the most popular imported car in the U.S. by a wide margin is the Volkswagen. In the state of California, it now ranks 7th in sales, and demand is still well ahead of supply. But, like Detroit manufacturers, even Volkswagen has to look ahead; in fact, there are already a fussy few who quibble about the looks of the present Wolfsburg product. Accordingly, a Motorama-type feeler has been put forth to test public opinion on future styling changes for the VW sedan; it is a coupe designed by Ghia and built by Karmann (the German custom body firm which turns out the VW convertible), and which for brevity's sake we shall refer to as the VW-GK. Unlike most American "dream cars," however, this coupe is actually available for purchase providing the customer is well supplied with patience.

If looks are paramount, there is little doubt that the feeler will find fertile soil. The VW-GK, introduced at the European shows last fall and only recently on view here, has an almost universal appeal to the eye. It is, as the French would say, *une poupée vivante*. As can be seen from the accompanying photos, the car's Italian lines are low, beautifully balanced and ornament free. Whether intentional or not, there is very little suggestion that the engine is in the rear; the air-intake slots on the rear deck lid are the only reminder. Our test car, supplied by Allred Bros. of Glendale, came with an unusual two-tone paint job (metallic greenish-gold body and dark green top), but a wide choice of colors are available, most of which are quite a bit cheerier than those used on the standard sedan.

The interior of the car shows at once the touch of "custom" craftsmanship. Finish and attention to detail are excellent throughout. Two large, comfortable "contour" seats are provided for driver and passenger, and the seating position is far lower than in the sedan—almost, in fact, like a sports car. Fortunately the seats have a tremendous amount of fore-and-aft travel and can be adjusted to give full stretch even to the longest legs. If only the steering column were also adjustable! In spite of low seating, the top is proportionally even lower, and tall persons pay the usual penalty for sporty lines. Behind the front seats is a small flat bench with a vertical back, thinly padded and without springing. The back folds forward revealing a broad but shallow luggage compartment. For an occupant seated anywhere in the car, all-around visibility is unexcelled; the constant radius glass in the windshield and rear window contains an absolute minimum of distortion, and the four corner-posts are no more than an inch wide. The usual VW heating system is provided, but separate manual controls are added for each defrosting slot. The dash contains a 90 mph speedometer similar to but larger than that of the sedan, and there is a matching electric clock juxtaposed; indicator needle and hands are tapered for accurate reading.

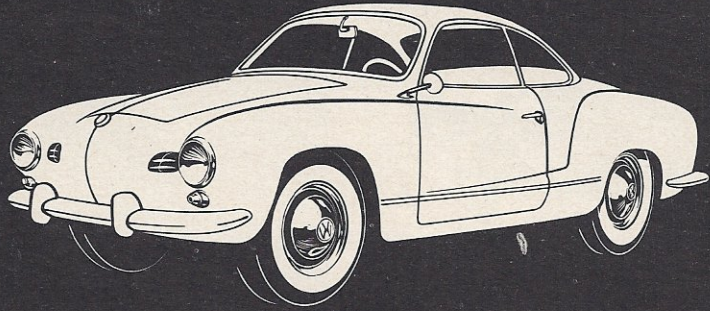
Aside from the bodywork, all components of the VW-GK are from the standard VW sedan. As might be expected, therefore, the GK drives, feels, and sounds pretty much like the sedan. A trip of the scales, however, indicated that it weighs about 120 lbs. more; even so, the weight distribution is identical—56.5% on the rear wheels. Underway to the testing strip, we found the noise level to be about the same as in the sedan. But the good aerodynamic lines of the GK make it far less susceptible to wind buffeting at highway speeds than its higher, more slab-sided cousin, and its somewhat lower center of gravity gives a more secure, stable feeling in tight spots. Unfortunately there is seldom a gain without a loss, and ventilation is something of a problem. There are no vent-panes in the wind-up windows, and the rear quarter-panes are fixed. Result: lower the windows even a little and your head is blasted; close them tight and you suffocate. The heater is no help since, unlike more complicated systems, it supplies only hot air. The point sounds minor but makes for chronic discomfort. (Continued on page 52)

Front compartment has the new-shaped gas tank, standard on all '56 VWs, which gives added storage space.



ROAD AND TRACK ROAD TEST NO. F-5-56

VOLKSWAGEN COUPE



SPECIFICATIONS

List price	\$2475
Wheelbase	94.5 in.
Tread, front	50.8
rear	49.2
Tire size	5.60-15
Curb weight	1760
distribution	43.5/56.5
Test weight	2110
Engine	flat 4
Valves	po/v
Bore & stroke	3.03 x 2.52 in.
Displacement	1192 cc
Compression ratio	6.60
Horsepower	36
peaking speed	3700
equivalent mph	74.8
Torque, ft/lbs	56
peaking speed	2000
equivalent mph	40.4
Mph per 1000 rpm	20.2
Mph at 2500 rpm	120
Gear ratios (overall)	
4th	3.61
3rd	5.41
2nd	8.27
1st	15.8
R&T high gear performance factor	26.9

PERFORMANCE

Timed top speed	76
Max. speeds in gears—	
3rd (4500)	61
2nd (4500)	40
1st (4550)	21
Shift points from—	
3rd (4300)	58
2nd (4300)	38
1st (4150)	19
Mileage range.....	30/35 mpg

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph	6.9 secs.
0-40 mph	11.9 secs.
0-50 mph	18.2 secs.
0-60 mph	28.8 secs.
0-70 mph	49.2 secs.
Standing 1/4 mile....	23.6 secs.

TAPLEY READINGS

Gear	Lbs/ton	Mph	Grade
1st	400	15	20%
2nd	300	22	15%
3rd	190	32	10%
4th	115	37	6%
Total drag at 60 mph, 105 lbs			

SPEEDO ERROR

Indicated	Actual
30 mph	29.9
40 mph	38.4
50 mph	46.7
60 mph	56.0
70 mph	64.9
83 mph	77.9

