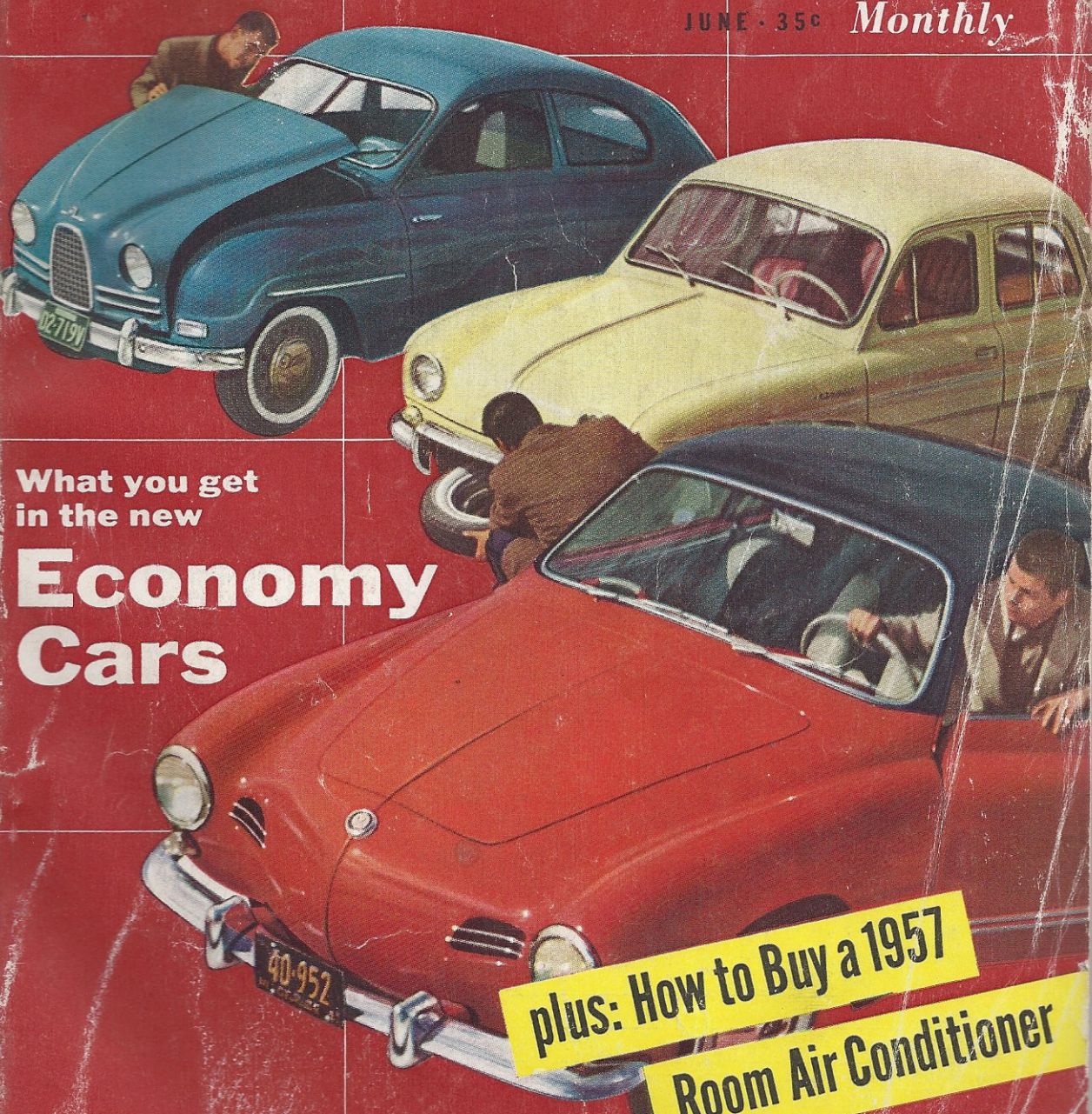


POPULAR SCIENCE

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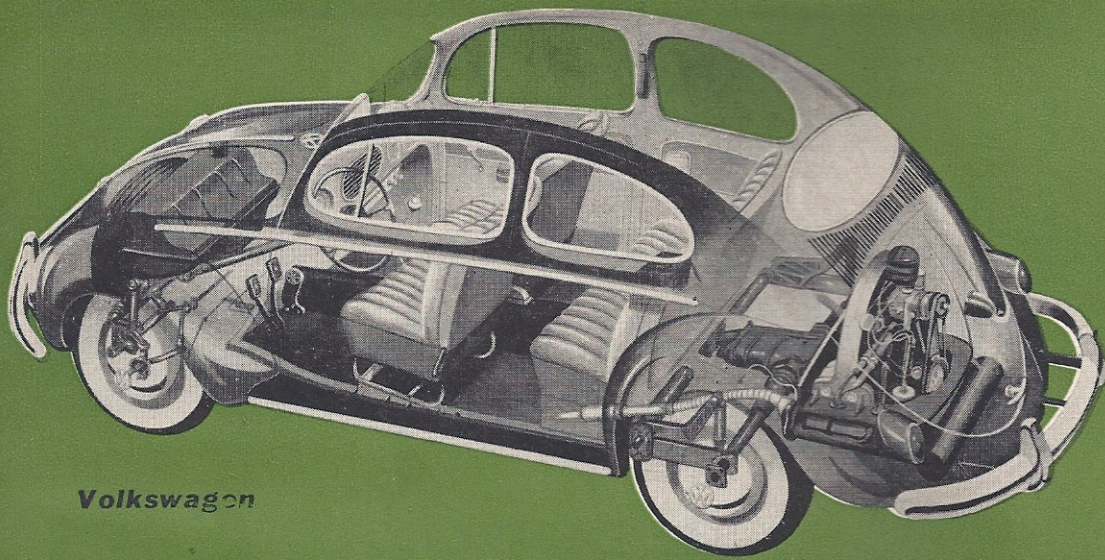


What you get
in the new

Economy Cars

plus: How to Buy a 1957

Room Air Conditioner



Volkswagen

CUTAWAY OF VW in standard body shows simplicity of construction. Ribbed floor pan contributes to overall body stiffness. Its four

cylinders are horizontally opposed. Displacement is one-fourth that of a '57 Chevrolet, fuel capacity and consumption about half a Ford's.

country—see chart on page 64). They were the German Volkswagen (pronounced Folks-vaagon) with a Karmann-Ghia (Ghee-ah) body, the Swedish Saab (Sob), a French Renault Dauphine (Renno Dough-feen) 5 CV, and a German BMW Isetta (I-setta).

These cars are like oysters—you have to acquire a taste for them. They range in horsepower from 10 to 86. And they are tiny. Four people can ride in the

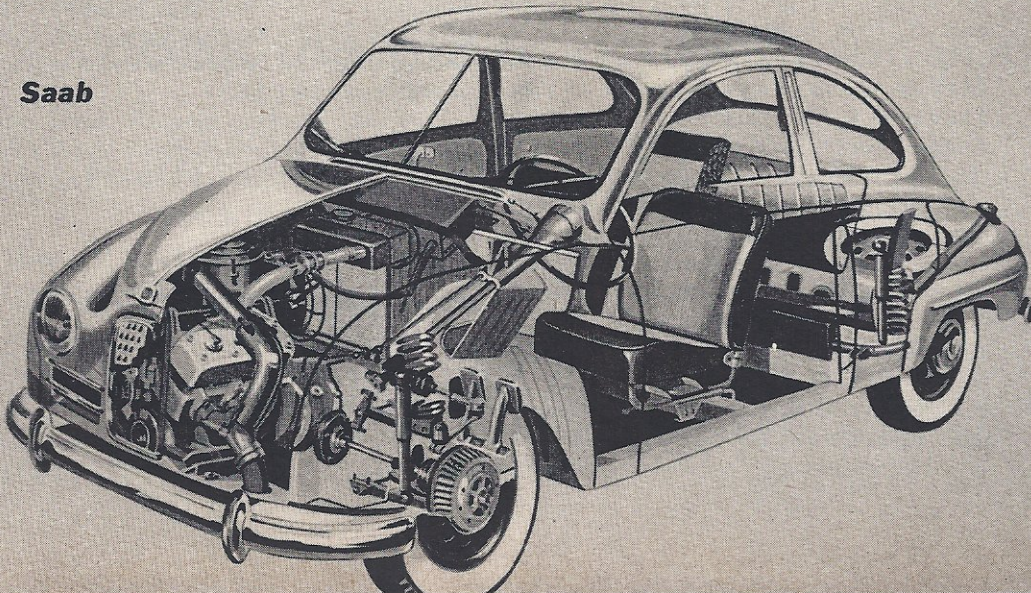
Saab or Renault, but those in the back seat can hardly play games. The Isetta will accommodate two grownups and a child; the VW Ghia just two (as against four for the standard VW). Yet the entry room in these cars is better than that on a good many 1957 U. S. cars.

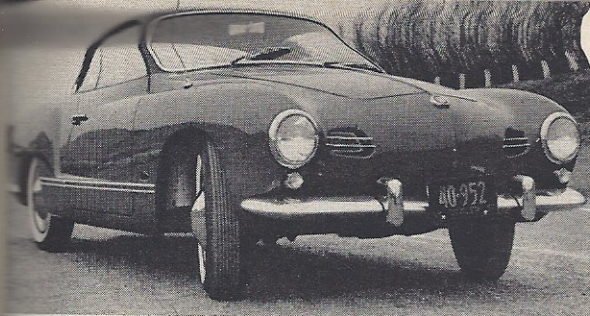
The Ghia excepted, these cars are not pretty. The Isetta, in particular, is like a buck-toothed girl with a 34-24-34 figure—homely but cute. The Renault and Saab

FRONT-WHEEL DRIVE on Swedish import gives car exceptional stability. Free-wheeling permits shifting without clutch. Instructions on panel

controls are all in international picture symbols. Like most foreign cars, the Saab is built to run wide-open all day without damage.

Saab





KARMANN-GHIA BODY on VW reduces passenger capacity to two. Right front seat is reversible. Price: \$1,000 more than standard VW.

look, to an American, as if they had been worked over by a head-shrinker.

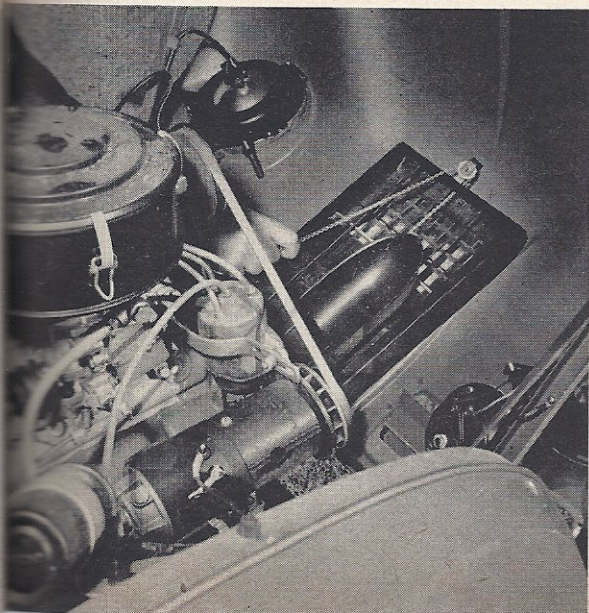
My wife looked biliously at the Saab when I brought it home.

"Couldn't you put it somewhere else?" she asked. "Say, *behind* the house?"

Well, every man has to field such bunts in his own way. Then a woman neighbor saw the Saab and oohed:

"American cars *all* look alike. Now *this* car has a certain esthetic appeal."

SAAB'S ENGINE IS CANTED left to make room for accessories. It starts instantly in zero cold. Roller blind deflects air for warmup.



An hour later I overheard my wife remark to someone on the telephone, "It's small, but it's a sort of esthetic experience, you might say."

Snob appeal, cartooned as the suburban matron who meets her man at the commuter train in a Jaguar with a flagon of Martinis, undoubtedly is one of the compelling reasons why people buy the little foreign cars.

What are the other reasons? Let's take a look:

The Karmann-Ghia Volkswagen

This car is sheer fun. It has everything, except passenger capacity, that the regular beetle-body VW has, plus the style that only the Italians can give an automobile. The bodies are made under Italian license.

The Ghia does not have the torque in high gear of either the Renault or the Saab. Shifting the four-speed box requires dexterity. But the clutch is smooth, and the floor-mounted stick, within comfortable reach, slides through the gears like silk.

The Ghia's cornering is good, and the all-round visibility superb. The ride is comparatively hard.

Biggest seller—by far—of all the little foreign cars over here, the VW has a four-cylinder, rear-positioned, air-cooled engine that goes on and on, like the wonderful one-hoss shay.

The secret of the VW's durability lies in an engine that has been "detuned." A kissing cousin of the high-performance, and expensive, Porsche, the VW has a short-stroke piston speed of only 1,440 feet per minute wide open. With a lower compression ratio than the Porsche, a cam that helps hold top speed under 70 m.p.h., and restricted "breathing," the VW deliberately is built to wear well.

You can get cylinder heads to hot it up, as well as a supercharger, but that voids a guarantee that is double that for most U. S. cars—six months, or 6,000 miles of driving.

The VW's popularity in this country inevitably inspires the pranksters. Some