



Charismatic coupé

**Peter Noad describes
the Corrado 16V, not
the most powerful
of Volkswagen's
sports coupés but
still desirable and
fun to drive...**

WHEN the Corrado was unveiled in 1998 it was described as the fastest and most exciting model in the Volkswagen range. It was said to be "a true sports car" which could compete with the Japanese products that were dominating this area of the market and, indeed, it could even compare with the Porsche 944. The Corrado's looks and handling were very highly acclaimed and it won most of the contemporary group tests of sports coupés which were conducted by motoring magazines.

From an analytical rather than emotional standpoint, though, the Corrado's success seemed less assured. It weighed almost as much as a Passat but was hardly any bigger inside than a Scirocco,

MODEL HISTORY: CORRADO 16V

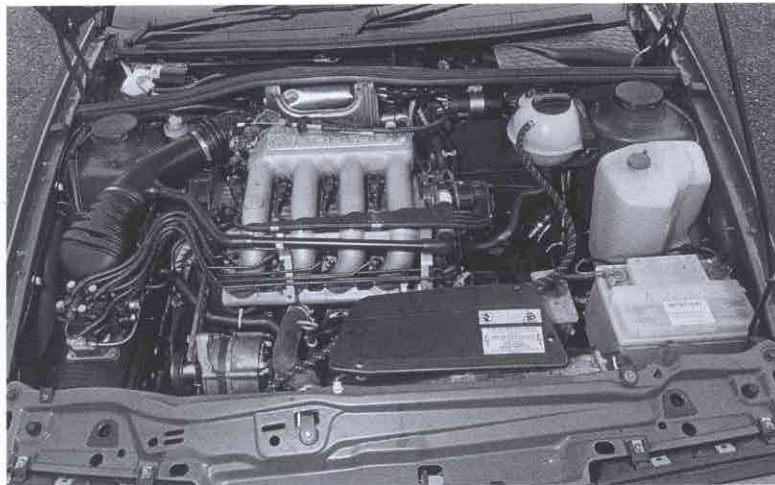
and the 16V, the only right-hand-drive available initially, was slower on acceleration than a Golf GTI 16V; it even had less power than the Golf, 136bhp instead of 139.

It was hard to view the Corrado as anything other than a replacement for the Scirocco, but Volkswagen continued to produce Sciroccos for another three years, during which time the company offered two sports coupés, similar in size and performance but differing in price by about £5,000!

This did not deter prospective customers for the Corrado, though. Despite the availability of the Scirocco as a cheaper alternative, the Corrado was eagerly awaited and the 700 which were allocated to the UK for 1989 were quickly snapped up at the initial price of £16,699 for the 16V model.

The "fastest VW" claim was justified for the 16V, but only with regard to top speed. Thanks to a drag coefficient of 0.32, the Corrado could achieve 132mph, which was 2mph more than the Scirocco GTX 16V with its Cd of 0.33. But on 0-60 acceleration, the Corrado's 8.2 seconds left it 0.6 seconds behind the 130kg lighter Scirocco.

But the Scirocco was still based on the same chassis as the Mk 1 Golf, with all its limitations, whereas the Corrado's handling set new standards for Volkswagen and, indeed, for front-wheel-drive cars generally. In our road test in



Left: 16-valve engine produced 136bhp, torque characteristics much improved with the 2.0 version

Right: Sleek styling of the Corrado was its major advantage over the boxy Scirocco

Volkswagen Audi Car we said: "Steering response is very sharp indeed, feeling almost nervous and twitchy on first acquaintance, with a tendency to oversteer. One soon gets used to this ultra-responsive handling and realises that the car is perfectly stable – it just needs less input for any given manoeuvre and is capable of cornering extremely rapidly. It is most impressive on sharp, tight corners and through slalom-type S-bends, which it can negotiate quicker than any other standard road car we have driven."

This demonstrated what can be achieved by fine tuning, because there was no new technology in the Corrado's suspension: it employed Mk 2 Golf components at the front and Passat parts at the rear. The

handling was also helped by the low centre of gravity – the Corrado was 3in. lower overall than a Golf (but 1.5in. taller than a Scirocco) – although a contributory factor in terms of steering response was the use of unusually high front tyre pressures (36psi). The 16V was equipped with 6x15 Sebring 16-spoke alloy wheels fitted with 185/55 tyres. Braking was by discs all round (256mm vented at the front) and the steering was power-assisted.

The Corrado was an inch wider than the Scirocco, but no longer. Except for a little more headroom, it offered no more interior space and had slightly less luggage capacity than its predecessor. The rear seat was well-shaped but there was only

'It is most impressive through slalom-type S-bends, which it can negotiate quicker than any other standard road car we have driven'

SPECIFICATION

Engine	Up to 7/92	From 8/92
Displacement	1781cc	1984cc
Number of cylinders	4	4
Bore and stroke	81 x 86.4mm	82.5 x 92.8mm
Compression ratio	10.8:1	10:1
Fuel system	K-Jetronic injection	K-Motronic injection
Power output	136bhp (100kW) @ 6300rpm	136bhp (100kW) @ 5800rpm
Maximum torque	119lb.ft. (162Nm) @ 4800rpm	133lb.ft. (180Nm) @ 4400rpm
Chassis		
Transmission	Front-wheel drive	
Gearbox	Five ratios	
Top gear ratio	21.3mph/1000rpm	
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar	
Rear suspension	Torsion beam, trailing arms, track-correcting bearings, coil springs, anti-roll bar	
Front brakes	Ventilated discs	
Rear brakes	Discs	
Wheels	Alloy 6.0x15	
Tyres	185/55 VR 15 or 195/50 R15V	
Dimensions		
Length/width/height	159.4/65.9/51.9in, 4048/1674/1318mm	
Wheelbase	97.2in, 2470mm	
Track (front/rear)	56.5/56.2in, 1435/1428mm	
Minimum ground clearance	5.5in, 129mm	
Turning circle	34.4ft, 10.5m	
Luggage capacity, seat up/folded	sphere method 10.5/29.4cu.ft, 297/833 litres block method 8.3/28.6cu.ft, 235/810 litres	
Fuel tank capacity	Up to 1991: 12 gallons, 55 litres From 1992: 15.4 gallons, 70 litres	

Weights	Up to 7/92	From 8/92
Unladen weight	2426lb, 1100kg	2590lb, 1175kg
Total permitted weight	3318lb, 1505kg	3406lb, 1545kg
Permitted trailer load, with/without brakes	2646/1147lb, 1200/520kg	2646/1147lb, 1200/520kg

PERFORMANCE

	1.8	2.0
Maximum speed	132mph, 213kph	130mph, 210kph
0-50mph, sec	6.0	6.5
0-60mph, sec	8.2	8.3
0-70mph, sec	11.2	11.7
30-50mph (3rd gear), sec	5.0	5.1
30-50mph (4th gear), sec	7.7	7.9
50-70mph (4th gear), sec	8.1	7.4
50-70mph (5th gear), sec	10.3	10.5
Overall fuel consumption	35.7mpg, 7.9 litres/100km	32.8mpg, 8.6 litres/100km
Economical driving	43.8mpg, 6.5 litres/100km	44.8mpg, 6.3 litres/100km

PRODUCTION DATA

Production started	October 1988
Production ended	July 1995
Chassis number code	50
Engine code	1.8: KR 2.0: 9A

PRICES

UK price when new	£16,699-£18,499
Typical value now	£4,000-£9,500



Right: Rear seat area cosy rather than comfortable, with limited legroom; centre console provides useful storage



limited legroom. The split backrest folded to increase luggage space and there was a forward hinged centre armrest which could contain a first aid kit.

The sports front seats, both with height adjusters, ensured a comfortable driving position and gave excellent support for fast cornering, helping to reinforce the feeling of security when driving fast. The fascia came straight from the Passat and, although it lacked individuality, it was a great improvement over the Scirocco's in terms of build quality. The mundane steering wheel, which was standard issue on practically every Volkswagen at that time, was the least attractive feature.

The Corrado's exterior styling, with its chisel-like front and a suggestion of the Mk 1 Scirocco at the rear, was very successful. The rectangular headlamps looked more functional than the stylised oval shapes we see nowadays and, with four main beams, they performed well.

A special feature was the electrically operated rear spoiler, which extended automatically at 45mph to increase downforce and retracted at low speed to provide better visibility in traffic and when parking. Central locking, electric mirrors, foglamps, rear wash/wipe, courtesy light delay and an MFA trip computer were standard. Electric windows, a sunroof and leather were optional extras.

When I tested a Corrado 16V in 1989, I commented that the performance felt similar to a Golf GTI 16V – acceleration figures for the Corrado were 0–60mph in 8.2 seconds, 30–50mph in third gear in 5.0 and 50–70 in fourth in 8.1. It was also quite economical – fuel

GOOD POINTS

- ✓ Superb handling
- ✓ Looks great
- ✓ Excellent build quality
- ✓ Good rust resistance
- ✓ Comfortable and durable interior
- ✓ Good fuel economy
- ✓ Performance can be easily updated
- ✓ Well supported by owners' club
- ✓ Great to drive

BAD POINTS

- ✗ Some parts very expensive
- ✗ Early cable gearchange lacks precision
- ✗ Standard damping inadequate
- ✗ Cramped rear seat

consumption was 35.7mpg overall and an excellent 43.8mpg when driving carefully.

Subjectively, I found it to be great fun to drive. It seemed to be quieter and more refined than a Golf GTI and the ride comfort was outstanding for a sports car with such good handling.

In 1991, the Corrado 16V gained electric windows, an electric sunroof and adjustable steering column as standard equipment. Then, at the beginning of 1992, it was given the Estoril "five-hole" wheels with 195/50-15 tyres, a more sporty-looking three-spoke steering wheel (similar to that of the Polo G40), a larger fuel tank and ABS braking (previously only

Split-folding rear seat improves luggage capacity, but full-size spare wheel causes awkward hump in floor



Electrically controlled rear spoiler rises at speeds of over 45mph



Sports seats afforded comfortable driving position, dashboard was from the contemporary Passat

MODEL HISTORY: CORRADO 16V



available on the G60). An immediate identification is that the grille was changed from seven bars to four.

Later in 1992, the 16V engine was enlarged to 2.0 litres and equipped with a catalyst and K-Motronic injection. Maximum power was unchanged (136bhp) but it peaked at lower revs (5800 instead of 6300) and torque improved from 119lb.ft. at 4800rpm to 133lb.ft. at 4400, making it more flexible and responsive.

At the same time, the knobs and switches were revised, a variable wiper interval added and the rear centre armrest was deleted. The UK price in 1993 was £18,179.

Our test of a 2.0-litre 16V showed it to be no quicker than the original 1.8, except in fourth gear from 50 to 70 (7.4 seconds). At 32.8mpg, it was slightly thirstier overall but this may have been due to a greater proportion of full throttle motoring because the figure for economical driving, 44.8mpg, was even better than that achieved by the 1.8. In particular, we highlighted the fact that the fuel consumption of the 16V was nearly 10mpg better than

the 190bhp 2.9 VR6. We described the Corrado 16V as a thoroughly satisfying car to drive which should not be underrated. "Its performance is quite enough to outpace most other cars on the road, particularly if you exploit the engine's high-revving characteristics by using the five-ratio gearbox to the full. Above all, it provides a nicely-balanced combination of performance and handling."

Corrado production ended in 1995 and for its final year the 16V was fitted with Westwood five-spoke wheels, while the choice of paintwork included some subtly rich-looking pearl effect metallics, listed alongside. Optional extras included Recaro seats (in cloth or leather), heated seats, traction control, headlamp washers and a leather-rimmed steering wheel and gearknob.

Alongside the higher-performing G60 and VR6 models, there is a tendency to look down on the Corrado 16V as the bottom-of-the-range model (actually it wasn't, because Volkswagen later also listed a 115bhp 2.0 8V model). As we remarked at the time, the 16V should not be underrated: even in standard form it is a quick car and there is plenty of scope for uprating the engine, as with the Golf GTI 16V. The normally-aspirated four-cylinder has the advantage of simplicity; it is by far the most economical of the Corrado power units, and very durable.

The 16V may not have the performance or charisma of the G60 or VR6, but it has the same looks and handling and few people outside the owners' club and readership of this magazine would know the difference. It deserves a place alongside its more powerful brothers as a future classic and shares with them the distinction of being one of the best looking and best handling cars that Volkswagen has ever produced. 🇩🇪

OWNER'S OPINION

MY 1990 Corrado 1.8 16V, H774 ARC, can claim to have started the VW Corrado Club of Great Britain! After seeing pictures of the new Corrado, late in 1988, I just had to have one. I'd been a VW fan since 1945, my first being a 1958 1192cc Beetle which cost about £495 when I came out of the RAF in 1954. After many years trying to find my ideal sporting car – TR3/3A, Riley 1.5, Mini Cooper and many others – in 1987 I returned to the VW scene, with six Golfs and two Polos.

I then found this beautiful 1990 Corrado 16V outside one of Nottingham's prestige car dealers. The salesman was a friend of mine, having previously been with the local VW dealership, John Fox of Nottingham. The car was in immaculate condition, bought in Osnabruck by a serviceman and taken to Cyprus, where it spent two years before coming to the UK. It is a RHD European-spec model.

Needless to say, a very good deal was concluded, and I shed a small tear for my black Mk 2 Golf GTI, as I drove off in my new-found Corrado. From that day in November 1993, I have visited many VW shows, having been in Club GTI, and I started to enter the Concours scene. After the Expo '95 event, then at Billing Aquadrome, I decided to form the Corrado Register which became VWCCGB in Jan '96.

'Ol' H774' has now covered 84,000 miles and has been part of the VWCCGB display at every show we've been to, although I have supplemented it with a Corrado VR6 Auto.

Brian Rose, Nottingham

'One of the best looking and best handling cars that Volkswagen has ever produced'

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COLOURS

STANDARD paint colours were Tornado red, Alpine white, black, Helios blue metallic and Quartz grey metallic, with Pearl red, Pearl blue, Pearl green, dark green metallic, Diamond silver and the famous Nugget yellow available to special order. Upholstery was in dark petrol blue/green or platinum.

■ 1995: Twilight violet, Blackberry, Moonlight blue, Sherry, Aqua, Satin silver, Classic green and Diamond black – together with Flash red, Candy white and plain black. Upholstery was in "Splitt" black or "Atout" grey.

