



PROGRESS REPORT

(2020) VW GOLF MKVIII vs VW GOLF MKI (1982)

Witness the evolution of the semi-luxurious hatchback of the people

HANG ON, THE MKI GOLF DIDN'T COME OUT IN 1982...

Quite right – VW invented its hatchback icon way back in 1974. There's 46 years of evolution between these Golfs I and VIII. But what makes this an interesting match-up is that we've got two luxury Golfs. The brand new range topper is the £27,130 Golf Style 1.5 eTSI. The first Golf to experiment with the plush end of the market was the high-end £5,682 Golf GL.

WOW ME WITH SOME TOP-OF-THE-RANGE FEATURES THEN

I'm packing a turbocharged 48V hybrid-assisted 1.5-litre engine sending drive via a seven speed, twin-clutch gearbox. Adaptive cruise control and lane following. Downloadable updates for the touchscreen. A choice of 32 colours for the ambient lighting. LED light clusters all round. I could go on...

I WAS ASKING ABOUT THE OLD-TIMER, ACTUALLY

Ah, how times have changed. Exclusive to the Golf GL back then were such frivolities as plastic-trimmed door tops instead of bare painted metal, a rev counter, and a wolf emblem on the steering wheel, in homage to Wolfsburg. The front grille and window-winder handles wore a thin chrome border, but the ultimate piece of one-upmanship was the headlight washer jets. The newest Golf's eyes can see around corners and dip their main beam, but they're not fitted with electronically operated tear ducts.

TELL ME SOMETHING CRACKERS ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The tricked out mild-hybrid Golf of 2020 makes 148bhp – over double what the GL puts out. And despite weighing around half a tonne more, it's not only quicker than the GL – today's totally run-of-the-mill model would outrun a MkI GTI. And a MkII 8V. And a MkIV. It's also around 10mpg kinder on fuel at a steady 75mph.

AND IT'S NOW BIGGER, SAFER AND MORE COMPLICATED...

True, but look closer and you spot the DNA that Volkswagen's transplanted to the present day. Yes, there are cues like the angled C-pillar, the chrome-framed grille and the quarterlight window, but even inside, the MkI hoists the radio above the vents so it's in your eyeline, next to the instrument dials. Today's Golf is completely digital inside, but follows the same basic layout logic.

WOULDN'T I JUST WISH I WAS IN A GTI?

In the new one, probably. It's an extremely sure-footed, safety-first drive, but hardly memorable. But in the MkI GL? You don't need the lipstick version. With no power steering, a slick III' manual box and a rorty carburettor-fed 1457cc engine, it is just as much of a giggle to goad as its more famous relative. Just remember to give the brakes plenty of space to work – they're notoriously weak in RHD MkIs, because the servo remains set up for LHD. We weren't all in as much of a rush in the Eighties.



WORDS: OLLIE KEW PHOTOGRAPHY: MARK RICCIONI

CHEAP WEDGES



FIAT X1/9 (1988)

LESS THAN £5K

Price now £4,995
Harris says "Not the usual rot box" is how all good classified ads start, right? Rust is the foe of many cars, but it really is the little Fiat's kryptonite. Just think of the mid-engined X1/9 as a cut-price Stratos that won't try to kill you.



LOTUS EXCEL (1991)

LESS THAN £10K

Price now £7,995
Harris says And there you were thinking Lotus is just the Elan, Elise, Esprit and the wonderful Exige. Well it kinda is. Which is why an Excel in such fine fettle commands the same money as an Elise with crash damage.



ALFA ROMEO GTV 2000 (1979)

LESS THAN £15K

Price now £13,250
Harris says This is not a GTV6, you'll have spotted. Which is why it's not fantastical money. But, whatever the engine, this is one of the best looking Alfas of the lot. Which is hardly a hollow compliment to pay anything.



Honest Harris' Bargain Corner



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BADLANDS ARCADE, 1989

It's not often racing videogames tackle the bleak possibility of nuclear apocalypse; the closest thing we've got to a weapon of mass destruction is usually the blue shell in *Mario Kart*. In 1989, though, Atari took the popular top-down racing formula of its more conventional arcade game *Championship Sprint* and dumped in a liberal helping of *Mad Max* chaos. *Badlands* was born.

Badlands pitched three armoured cars against each other in a series of eight increasingly grim and gritty circuits, starting in an abandoned city and ending by slithering around a gutted junkyard. Every snaking track was entirely contained within a single screen, with shortcuts, hazards and some remarkably evocative artwork, considering it had fewer pixels to play with than your smartwatch. And all this to the backing of a squelchy yet ominous 16-bit sci-fi soundtrack.

There were a few more strategic options than in the sanitised world of *Championship Sprint*, too. For a start there's the howitzer strapped to the roof of your car on the title screen, though in practice it's a disappointing pea-shooter that only serves to slow down your opponents rather than turn them into a shower of metal confetti. You're better off tactically colliding with destructible elements of the scenery, toppling water towers into the path of the other racers to slow them down or clattering a refinery storage tank and spilling gallons of slippery crude across the track surface.

With Formula One in a seemingly endless state of existential crisis, it's reassuring that in *Badlands'* dystopian vision of the future, even after the literal end of the world, motorsport survives in some form. If this is the entertainment we're left with as we tuck into our Sunday lunch of a rat on a stick, we'll gladly take it. **Mike Channell**