

New Soft Top Golf from VW

by Ian Lynas

VOLKSWAGEN seemingly can do no wrong when it comes to the Golf, surely one of the most successful and best loved cars of all time.

It is no secret that a new Mk 7 version is soon to be released and recently I had the opportunity to take the wheel of the new Golf Cabriolet.

Right away I must point out this is not based on the new car.

More than 1.42 million have been sold and last year the latest version of the Cabriolet arrived, the new offering is for the fast lane, the GTi.

The 2011 Geneva Motor Show is where Volkswagen took the wraps off their latest soft top Golf, a car that is eagerly awaited despite its rather hefty price tag. The GTi uses a two litre TSI engine which develops a very useful 210PS.

With a six-speed manual or DSG

gearbox, maximum, rest to 62 mph takes 7.3 seconds, with a top speed of 147 mph (146mph with the DSG).

Despite this performance, fuel economy remains very acceptable at 37.2 mpg, with CO₂ emissions of 177 g/km (180 DSG).

The GTi version takes styling cues from the hatchback, including the honeycomb grille and red colour details, plus Jacara tartan cloth. The interior is tastefully executed and gives this car a real premium look.

The roof is operated from a central switch underneath the armrest between the driver's seat and passenger seat. Opening and closing is a painless task, possible while driving at speeds up to 18mph and the exercise takes just nine seconds to open and eleven seconds to close.

Two hydraulic pumps activated by a central switch generate the necessary pressure and I observed how quiet the opening/closing operation is. Special care was taken to ensure that the least possible noise is generated.





Unlatching and latching of the soft top is handled by an electromechanical locking system which operates automatically meaning no additional manual unlatching or latching is necessary. The system senses, via two micro switches, whether the roof is completely opened or closed, and it informs the driver of the OK status by an acoustic signal and a visual message in the multifunction display.

To ensure a good rear view, the roofs

heated rear glass window was designed to be especially large for a cabriolet; it is joined to the soft top by what is known as high-frequency welding.

When the roof is stowed, the upper surface of the front roof bow covers the top surface of the storage box, eliminating the need for a separate cover. Not only does this allow faster operation but it also means it does not need to descend as deeply into the boot space, which remains a practical 250 litres with roof up or down.

I did use the windshield during my test drive and when not in use this can be kept in the boot.

Lots of interior space for four passengers; while a 50:50 split/folding rear seat and Easy-Entry function ensure maximum practicality and good access to the rear.

In changing the hatchback to a soft-top, modifications were made to ensure that safety, comfort and refinement were not compromised in the cabriolet version.

These include reinforced window frames and structural modifications to the underbody, side panels, cross-members and doors to endow the new car with an extremely high level of torsional rigidity.

Also benefiting refinement is the design of the fabric roof which has an additional exterior skin, as well as new window and door seals.

This version of the Golf like the others majors on safety, an active rollover protection system is employed, ABS, ESP and front and side head/thorax airbags are also all standard.

My test car was equipped with a number of options, including the RNS 510 touch screen sat nav/radio system; this adds £1,780 to the final bill.

All round a very satisfying car with excellent road manners and looks which set it apart from its competitors.