

Volkswagen Golf 1.4 TSI

By Jim Mc Cauley

The same, only different is probably the best way to summarise the new Golf, yet it would be unkind to leave it like that. Volkswagen argues that its new mainstay model, now in its 7th generation, has attained the same iconic recognition as the Porsche 911, and that it would be totally wrong to drastically alter a legend.

The latest evolution is indeed all-new under the familiar signature body but it is longer, wider, lower and more spacious than the outgoing model. 38 years ago the original redefined the compact hatchback segment and 29 million sales later, there is justification in the company according it iconic status.



Most noticeable is the longer bonnet which adds a premium feel to the car while the crease on the front wing flows upwards as it rises into the window line. Lowered by just 28mm, a chamfer along the edge of the roof gives the impression that the car sits even lower, adding to the elegance of the overall design.

Initial engine choice comprises 1.2 and 1.4 petrol engines, each available in either of two power outputs as well as two diesels of 1.6 and 2.0 litre capacities. Test choice was the higher output 1.4 litre model driving through its standard 6-speed manual gearbox. This 140 PS unit additionally features Active Cylinder Technology which under certain load conditions deactivates two cylinders helping the model to stretch its combined fuel consumption to 58.9 mpg with a lowly CO2 emissions of 112 gms/km.

On road, and expectations are that it will sit in the shadow of the similarly engineered Audi A3, but the Golf surpasses the already high standards of the Audi. Refinement and flexibility are the key words from this turbocharged unit, 4th gear on twisty mountain sections supplying the ideal ratio for all corners. Not only does each gear fulfil needs across a wide rev band but the response is instant, and along with the steering precision takes the model line into another league. Suspension has also



been modified and lightened to improved both ride and handling and although very compliant on poorer surfaces, it provides sufficient firmness through corners to maintain its composure.

Inside, and the cabin extends the premium ambition of the new model with high quality materials, simple chrome ring detailing and enticing dual colour schemes that brighten the interior. A standard 5-inch infotainment display extends to 8-inches on the top spec model with proximity sensors negating having to touch the screen.

Other interior equipment, standard across the three-trim range includes seven airbags, air conditioning, reach and rake steering adjustment, electronic parking brake with hill holder function and electric windows and mirrors. Safety and driver assistance aids include the company's multi-collision braking system, electronic stability control, tyre pressure indicator and daytime running lights.

Overall, Volkswagen has maintained the identity of the Golf while increasing its dimensions, performance, quality and environmental credentials. It may carry a marginally higher price tag than some of the competition but the trade-off is in higher residual values.

Equipment grades comprise the familiar Volkswagen ones of S, SE and GT badging with the higher output 1.4 litre model tested currently only available in top GT trim. Among the additional equipment on this specification is City Emergency Braking which automatically brakes the car to avoid a collision in city traffic at speed of up to 30 km/h. This is an element of the radar based Front Assist which alerts the driver in any critical situation and preconditions the braking system for optimum performance.

A raft of other technical features are available which can alert the driver to unintentionally crossing road markings and to the fact that fatigue may be setting in.

While the range of the Mark VII Golf starts at £16,330, the 1.4 TSI 5-door model tested in top GT trim is listed at £22,705. All models are covered by a 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty which can be extended to 5-years / 90,000 miles. A 3-year fixed price service plan is also available for £329. The order books are now open for early 2013 deliveries.