

Quantum Syncro

Borrowing Audi's 4wd gives the Quantum some much-needed excitement. It also gives a hint of Volkswagen's plans for the future. James D. Sawyer reports.

The quickest way to explain what's new about the Volkswagen Quantum Syncro wagon? Think of it as a renamed Audi 4000CS Quattro, in wagon form, and let it go at that.

But that certainly wouldn't tell the whole story. What's new and significant about the Quantum Syncro is that it is, first of all, the



What's New...

latest addition to the growing ranks of fun carry-alls; it's maybe the first Quantum really worth knowing about.

Moreover, it serves as a bellwether of change for Volkswagen's car-selling efforts in the United States, a change in thought and philosophy—toward technology. Toward drivers' cars. Toward fun.

And toward earning a few more bucks along the way.

Volkswagen can see the third-world writing on the wall. In fact the company is even going to create some of the graffiti itself, importing models next year from its Brazilian operations to keep the entry end of the market covered. But for the rest of its line VW realizes it must sell something more than basic transportation if it is to thrive.

Syncro—VW's name for four-wheel drive—is the first of two steps in that direction. Steps 1A and 1B, actually, because Volkswagen is stepping here with a Syncro-pated rhythm. Step 1A is Audi's mechanical system; that's what VW has adopted for the Quantum Syncro. Step 1B is Volkswagen's own viscous coupling four-wheel-drive system, as fitted to the Vanagon in this country and on the continent (*AutoWeek*, Nov 4, 1985), and the Golf in Europe only (*AutoWeek*, March 17, 1986). (The latter situation is due to change, but more on that later.) The Quantum gets the Audi system because it could be taken off the shelf and quickly brought to market. The viscous

coupling system would have taken longer.

Volkswagen's technocrats won't admit openly that it irks them to have to use the Audi system, but you can tell from the way they speak that the NIH (Not Invented Here) syndrome is at work: they prefer the system they've developed. And with good reason. The VW system is simpler, probably less expensive to manufacture and just as effective. Indeed, VW says it will use the viscous setup on its future 4wd models.

But for now Volkswagen needs an image builder, especially for the Quantum line. This is it, and it meets its objectives. It cloaks the VW line in high-tech European—and more specifically German—mystique. It gives a boost to the Quantum, a notorious slow seller that needs an aura of excitement. And it gives Volkswagen a foothold in the upscale market where the upscale profit margins can be found.

Now, lest you think this is merely an excuse for VW to get in on the gouge, consider the price of the Quantum Syncro wagon and compare it to the price of the Audi 4000CS Quattro: VW, \$15,645; Audi, \$19,045. And with the VW you get the cargo capacity of a wagon, something not offered by Audi.

(Of course, the VW doesn't come in



sedan form. VW could only borrow so much from its sister division if it wanted to avoid a family squabble, and it did.)

So what we're talking about here is a sizable saving, unless of course your itch for status demands that you drive something with an Audi badge. If that doesn't matter but saving \$4400 does, buy the bastard offspring of the Lord of the Rings. It gets the job done just as well.

Only 2500 buyers will get to learn that first-hand this year. That's all the cars VW US could shake out of Germany. Once the supply line is working properly, Volkswagen expects to find buyers for 6000 Quantum Syncro wagons per year.



Will they, as Volkswagen has promised, have fun with this car? To quote senior editor Lovell: Yeah, buddy.

And why not? The car is, after all, basically the same as the 4000CS Quattro. We say basically because of the the wagon body. Also, the Q-car has to haul around about 250lbs more than the Audi and has a revised rear suspension to keep cargo capacity the same as the two-wheel-drive wagon.

The only drawback to the Quantum is the extra weight. While the 2.2liter engine makes the Audi reasonably quick, it's 115bhp copes less well in the Volkswagen. The factory claims a 0-60 time of 9.7sec, which would be respectable, but we could only squeeze out 11.2sec.

Still, the fun is there. The rear suspension loses nothing in road holding. It sticks like epoxy on mountain sweepers and hairpins. And the 4wd keeps you from getting stuck when the going takes you through the mud, snow, puddles and ruts.

Jack may not be quick, but he is nimble.

And he'll be joined by a lot of nimble relatives. The viscous system will be available on VW's US car lines within the next year to 18months, most probably on the Golf or Jetta. Eventually the system will be available on at least one model in each line except for the aforementioned Brazilian car.

The problem of quick will be addressed by Step 2 of VW's changed philosophy. Already we have received the Scirocco 16valve (*AutoWeek*, May 26). More performance is on the way in the form of a 24valve V6 due in the next generation of VW's sport coupe. This car, a replacement for the Scirocco, will be followed by all-new 16valve GTIs and V6 Quantums. And if they come with 4wd we'll not be surprised at all.

With the Quantum Syncro wagon Volkswagen has indeed taken a step in the right direction.

Specifications

Base Price:	\$15,645
Wheelbase, (in):	100.4
Length/Width (in):	178.9/66.7
Curb weight (lb):	2976
Powertrain:	Front-mounted 136cu in/ 2.2liter sohc in-line five, cast iron block, alloy heads, 115bhp @ 5500rpm, 126lb ft @ 3000rpm, four-wheel drive five-speed manual
0-60 (sec):	11.2
Top speed:	113mph
Mph at 1000rpm in top:	20.0
Suspension:	Ind front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; ind rear semi- trailing arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Brakes:	Vented front, solid rear discs
Tires:	195/60HR15
Mpg/range:	21mpg × 18.5gal = 388miles (EPA highway mileage)

Porsche 911 Carrera

What's new about the 911? Bill Lovell tries his best to find out, and finds the sun still rises in the east, the compass still points nearly north and you probably wouldn't want it any other way.

Try a 911, sir? Well, why not? Is it not after all the Year of the Ancient? Nicklaus among the magnolias, Shoemaker and the mint juleps, Allison in Alabama? This year George Burns is getting

thank you. Shall we do launch?

Hmmm, same old clutch, inspired by Vic Tanny. And the shifter, now that goes back a long way. Literally. You want to be dainty with that old lever or you're going to find yourself in any gear you want, as long as it's neutral. Hey, found one, found another and another. We seem to be at speed here. And still nothing new. Car still goes like hell. So it has a drag coefficient of a not-so-remarkable 0.39, look at all the wind tunnel-sculpted stuff scurry out of the way. So it's prehistoric, you want to go one on one with *Tyrannosaurus rex*?

Of course, you go into a turn a tad fast and you end up doing just that. You say he likes candy, but he doesn't understand when it's all gone? Yo. Now's the time to get delicate, diplomatic even, with the steering wheel and throttle. Good-bye Rambo, hello



Phil Berg photos

all the girls. (Remember, sweetheart, there's no substitute for experience.) A Porsche—a *real* Porsche, like the 911—is a terrible thing to waste on the young, having itself been given birth back during the Johnson Administration. So maybe we forget, from time to time, whether it was Lyndon's or Andrew's; memory, they say, is the second thing to go.

No, sir, try a *new* 911, complete with that newfangled fedlight that blocks out the better two-thirds of the rear-view mirror. Take the wheel, sir, note what's new.

Right, let's see here: Same old control layout, which is to say the familiarly eclectic collection of unlabeled switches, levers, knobs, pulleys, doo-dads and frammitts cunningly arranged like flotsam after a flood. Definitely from the hither and yon school of interior design. If it's worth doing, after all, it's worth groping for.

Nothing new there. Start it up.

Ah, that's better. Same old sound, like someone pouring atomic waste through a cement mixer. Same cammy burble, same Mormon Tabernacle Choir of valves, same near-octave scale. Nothing new back there,



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Alan Alda. Want to know where understeer and oversteer meet on the cosmic scale of oops? Try a 911, sir.

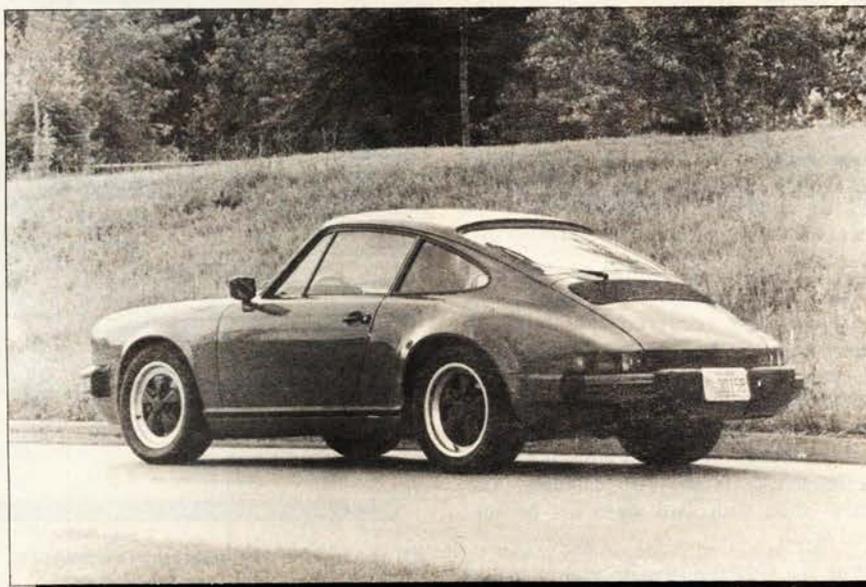
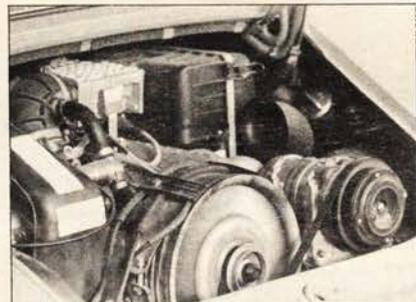
Gotta admit it's a bunch better since they put bigger tires on the rear, but that happened in the '70s, over a thousand *AutoWeeks* ago. Still nothing new except that damned CHMSL. Only one left thing to do.

Road trip. Let's just hustle us down to Mid-Ohio and watch us an IMSA race, and an IROC round while we're at it. Idle thought: IROC was more fun when they used 911s. Just ask Richard Petty. Second idle thought: IROC would be even more fun if they did a round at Ascot. Consider Hans Stuck on a dirt oval. Enough; the GT race: Holbert's Porsche takes the lead from Stuck. Last lead change there is. Porsche's got this down to an art. Same basic engine as ours: 3.2liter six, though Holbert's is all growed up and turbo'ed and Andialed some from this little old 200hp beauty. If it ain't broke...

How could I possibly have missed all that?

Verdict: Some of the parts—well, you never quite forget, even after all these years, that the 911 is a direct descendant of the VW Beetle. But the sum of the parts is pure Porsche. Some things never really change.

For that we are grateful. Same time, next year? **AW**



Phil Berg photos

What's left? Ah, the brakes. Only the very best thing about the 911. Just ask Officer Gotcha of the Ohio Inquisition.

There we are, cruising back north at the sort of rate of knots you tend to do in a 911. And there he is, sneaking down an on-ramp behind us, suddenly appearing in the right side mirror. It's a bang-bang play: The officer's hand reaches for the instant on; the 911's pads dive for the discs. Close, but no handcuffs. The radar readout scuffs and flutters and stops—right on 55.

Gotcha pulls alongside and stays there. For about five miles. He looks a little upset. Porsche, don't even touch those brakes. And kids, don't you either, unless you've been checking those mirrors *real good*. Trust me.

Still, we've found nothing new. My final, desperate act: Check the press kit.

Aha! Redesigned ducting for the heating and air-conditioning system. A little revised chassis tuning. And the biggie: color-coordinated carpeting in the load space.

Specifications

Base Price: \$33,975
 Wheelbase, (in): 89.5
 Length/Width (in): 168.9/65.0
 Curb weight (lb): 2756
 Powertrain: Rear-mounted 193.2cu in/ 3.2liter horizontally opposed sohc six, alloy block and heads, 200bhp @5900rpm, 185lb ft @4800rpm, rear-drive five-speed manual

0-60 (sec): 6.3
 Top speed: 146mph
 Mph at 1000rpm in top: 27.5
 Suspension: Ind front MacPherson struts with longitudinal torsion bars, anti-roll bar; rear ind semi-trailing arms, transverse torsion bars, coils and anti-roll bar
 Brakes: Discs, vented front and rear
 Tires: 185/70 VR 15 front, 205/60VR15 rear
 Mpg/range: 25mpg x 22.5gal = 562miles