



Mad moment?!

The Editor has bought a Mk 4 Golf V6 4Motion for everyday long-distance commuting, a decision which takes some explaining...

WITH HIGH annual mileages and exorbitant fuel prices, it might not seem the most logical choice to buy a Mk 4 Golf V6 4Motion for everyday use. But there is some method to my madness...

Ever since my modified Mk 4 GTI 1.8T was laid up, nearly two years ago now, after blowing yet another new engine to smithereens, I've been using what was only ever meant to be a short-term stopgap, a 1994 Audi 80 TDI. It was cheap, practical, comfortable and economical, and still is – over two years on – but not really the kind of car the Editor of *Volkswagen Driver* should be driving.

But, with a whole succession of road-test cars that need to be driven extensively and tested for our regular reviews, it hardly makes sense to spend a lot of money on buying a newer model that would spend much of its time parked on

the forecourt, depreciating with every passing day.

So, only needing to run my own car mostly during the Winter months, when four-wheel drive is a big advantage, for quite some while I'd been looking out for a B5 Passat TDI 4Motion. It's a car that offers a great combination of refinement, practicality and economy. But it's rare to find one for sale, let alone with sensible mileage at the right price. Then, last year, an additional thought was planted in my mind, when I featured a Mk 4 R32 which had been converted to run on half-price LPG (liquid petroleum gas). It opened out the options to include either a Passat V6 4Motion, or a Golf or Bora V6 4Motion, and I was keeping my eye on the classifieds.

Then, in early October, I finally sold the 1983 Audi 80 quattro which had been a dormant project for far too long (15 years, in fact!), and the cash was still burning a hole in my pocket when I logged on

to the Club GTI classified ads pages one Friday evening before leaving the office. Just the previous night, Tam Nyakobyashi had posted an ad for his unfinished project, a four-door Mk 4 Golf V6 4Motion, to which he'd fitted R32 suspension, replaced the tired leather seats with grey heated Recaros, and started some bodywork preparation.

It was clearly a very sound and tidy car, with 148,000 miles and a full service history, but it had suffered several nasty dents in the rear three-quarter panel, the corner of the roof and tailgate and Tam had filled and prepared them, and fitted a new tailgate, but hadn't got around to painting it. His other Golf, a V5, was taking all his time and so he'd decided to sell the V6. The asking price was just £750 ono and it had to be worth looking at. Even better was that he was in Birmingham, not far from my friend Andrew Chapple who runs

'An additional thought was planted in my mind, when I featured a Mk 4 R32 which had been converted to run on half-price LPG...'

'Even with the additional work on the car, the total bill so far was still little more than half the price of buying a similar example at typical asking prices...'



Volkswizard, the VW and Audi car sales specialist in Hollywood.

Next call was to Andrew, who readily agreed to come and view it with me the next day, and the rest is history. As it turned out, the exhaust wasn't fitted, there were quite a few loose ends, and only the front half of the R32 suspension was actually fitted, the rest was in the boot, but everything else checked out OK. After a jump start, it fired up and ran smoothly, making all the right noises, and it was clearly very straight and clean – the mudflaps fitted from new having saved the sides from stone rash.

The big advantage for me was that Andrew kindly offered to take delivery of the car to his workshops nearby, and over the next few weeks he sorted out quite a few of the necessary tasks. First job, after refitting the original exhaust and a new battery, was getting it through the MoT, with just a couple of bulbs required, and Simon Keyte at the local bodywork specialist Sprint Autos made a very good

job of finishing off the paintwork on the roof, rear three-quarter panel and tailgate. The front bumper is still rather stone-rashed, but I'll leave that until after the winter.

At about this time, I was in touch with the Goodyear press office, following a recent seminar on Winter tyres, and the offer came for them to provide a set for evaluation purposes. It was too good an opportunity to miss, and a set of four Goodyear UltraGrip8 Winter tyres in size 205/55-16 were soon winging their way across Birmingham, for Andrew to add to his job list. Local tyre centre Selly Oak Tyres made a good job of swapping them over, and Andrew inherited the original set of Kumhos to fit to one of his own cars.

It wasn't until a couple of weeks later that the logistics fell into place to go and collect it, when Chris Grant, another long-time VW-Audi owning friend of mine from my home town of Bracknell, offered to drive me up in his A4 1.8T quattro to collect it. I have a lot to thank Chris for, as it was

his loan of a few copies of *Beetling* and *hot VWs* magazines way back in 1976 that first got me interested in VWs. The rest is history...

Andrew had obviously spent quite a lot of time cleaning and polishing the car and it looked great, shimmering in the sunshine outside the Volkswizard premises. Even with the additional work on the car, the total bill so far was still little more than half the price of buying a similar example at typical asking prices for a going concern.

The return trip home that afternoon was the first time I'd driven a Mk 4 Golf V6 4Motion since we'd done the original road test, way back in September 2000, and I had no doubts how fast it was, and still is. We'd clocked 0-60 in 7 seconds and a top speed of over 145 mph, and I can still distinctly recall taking that original test car on a long run up to Lincolnshire to visit a friend who'd been very impressed indeed with a fast test drive across the local fen roads. In its time, the V6 4Motion was sensational, although it looks quite innocuous now, compared with R32s and the like – especially so this four-door example, with mudflaps, now devoid of its V6 badges.

These days, I'm just as interested in fuel economy as high performance, and the first drive was across country to Stratford-upon-Avon for a quick site survey of Shakespeare County Raceway (the new home for GTI International in



2013) and then home, south on the M40. That trip revealed a figure of 30.7 mpg on the MFA, running on quarter of a tankful of 95 RON premium from a Jet garage

That was driving very steadily, in sixth gear for most of the time (it pulls easily in top gear from as low as 20-25 mph), with occasional spurts for overtaking and varying the speed between 60 and 80 on the motorway, although mostly steady at around 70. It was pitch dark by the time it trickled up the long uphill drag through the cutting in the Chilterns near Stokenchurch, without me even noticing it!

That night, I put £20-worth of 100 RON V-Power in at the Shell station in Bracknell before I parked up, then drove in to work next morning on my usual route along the M4, M25 and M1, averaging 31.7 mpg on the MFA. A subsequent deliberate economy drive, the exact same regime we use for our road tests – a 60-mile motorway cruise home at 55-65 mph – pushed this to 34.7 mpg, which is probably about as good as it'll ever get. A couple of cross-country journeys have since returned figures of around 26-27 mpg.

Clearly, although not bad for such a high-performance car, that's not the kind of fuel economy I need for regularly commuting around 120 miles a day, and I'm now in preliminary discussions with Prins Autogas UK in Southampton, to arrange an LPG conversion.

Much more sophisticated these days than the rather agricultural 'propane'

installations of yesteryear, the Prins VSI conversion uses high-quality components, individual Keihin injectors and a separate ECU with advanced software to run the engine on LPG at around 70p per litre. That's about half the price of diesel, or high-octane petrol, which effectively means that my 204 PS 2.8-litre V6 with four-wheel drive will be capable of fuel economy equating to over 50 mpg in real terms. So, that's the plan – the 'method' to my madness.

Of course, I could – and maybe should have – spent the money on a new engine for my GTI 1.8T, but – with its stiff suspension set-up – that had already become a bit too much of a harsh trackday car for regular comfortable commuting. Instead, as soon as the V6 is reliably sorted out, I'll renew my enthusiasm for the GTI by stripping it and transforming it into an all-out trackday car. After all, the V6 4Motion should make an ideal tow car! 🇩🇪

CREDITS/CONTACTS

Goodyear www.goodyear.eu/uk_en/

Prins Autogas

Tel: 02380 446 467 www.prinsautogasuk.co.uk

Selly Oak Tyres

Tel: 0121 471 4702

www.tyresbirmingham.co.uk

Sprint Auto Services

Tel: 0121 474 4447 www.sprintautos.co.uk

Volkswizard

Tel: 07968 580 801 www.volkswizard.co.uk

MOSTLY COLD, wet and windy, the winter of 2012 wasn't providing quite the challenge I was hoping to present to the four-wheel drive Golf V6 running on high-performance winter tyres. So, when about an inch and a half of snow fell during the first week of December, I dropped everything in the office to head out and put the tyres to the test.

It soon transpired that the traction is nothing short of phenomenal, capable of climbing the steep slippery slope into a garage block nearby that even our 1983 Ur quattro had struggled with, and proving to be surefooted and confident on the local country roads despite a liberal coating of ice and slush. In fact, I felt much happier in the Golf than the Touareg V6 TDI which I'd also been driving that same day.

I'd previously seen the Goodyear Ultragrips demonstrated by climbing the ski slope at the Tamworth snowdome, but had always had the sneaking suspicion that some sort of trick must have been involved. Now I know for sure that these tyres provide unbelievable grip on snow, and my only doubt is that they are probably just as capable on a front-wheel drive car!

Of course, the advantage of winter tyres isn't just found in terms of their grip on snow and ice. They work much better in all types of cold, wet weather throughout the year, not just in the depths of winter. As well as the improved traction, wet braking ability is greatly improved – stopping distances reduced considerably – and so winter tyres are of great benefit even on a car with four-wheel drive. There's actually a strong case to run winter tyres all year round, and only fit specialist high-performance rubber during the height of summer, or for track days, rather than the other way around.