

ROAD TEST: 1967 VW KARMANN GHIA HAS NOT BEEN RUINED BY IMPROVEMENT

VOLKSWAGEN

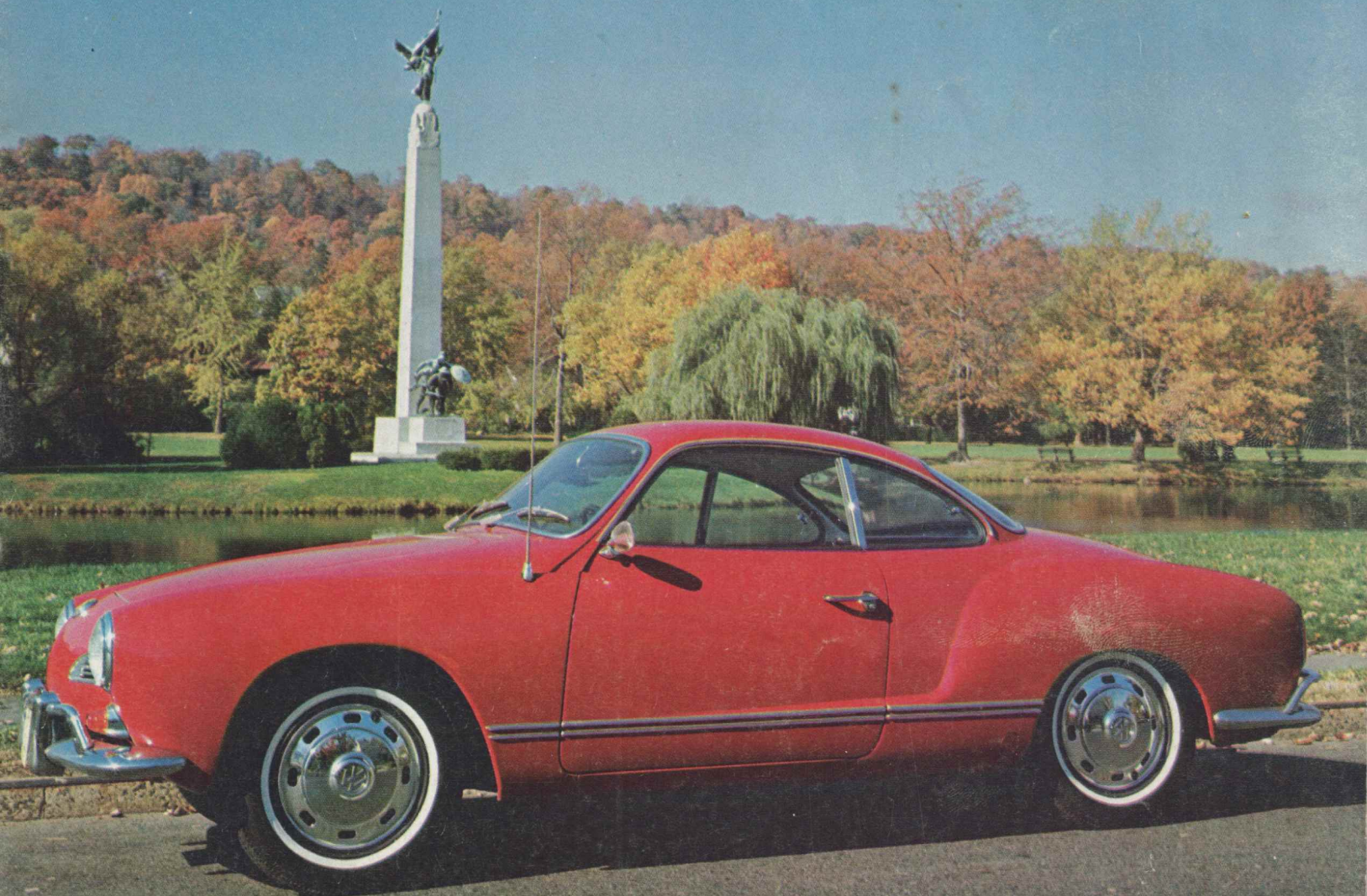
# FOREIGN CAR GUIDE

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MARCH 1967—50 CENTS

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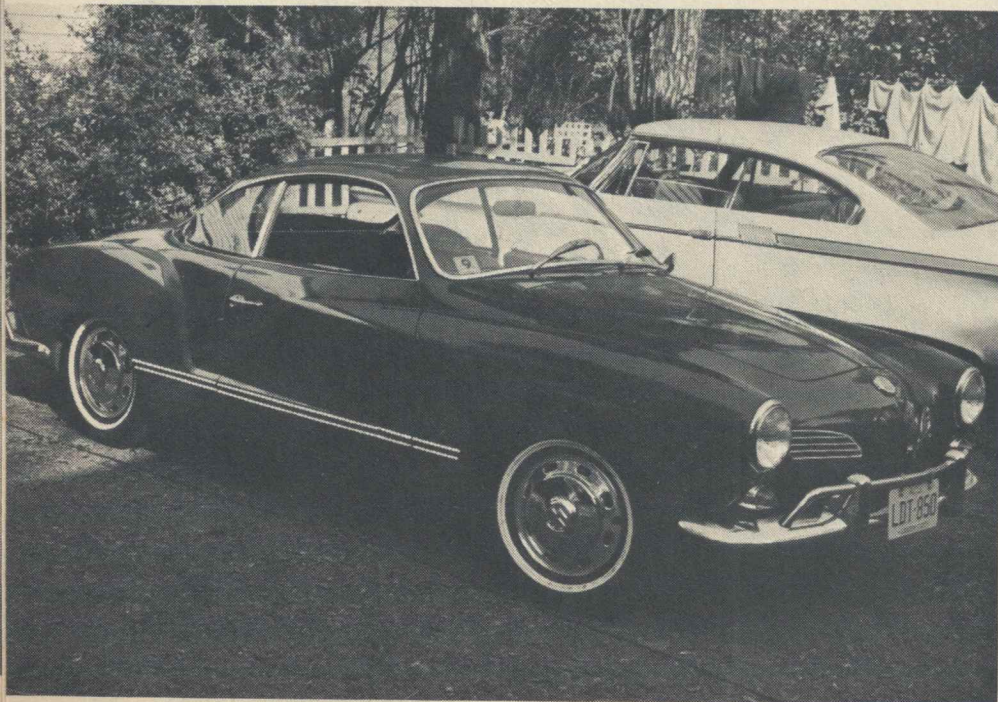


# ROAD TEST

## 1967 VW

By A. C. BENDICT

KARMANN  
*Ghia*



► It's easy to spoil a good thing when you try to improve it. And VW has tried hard to improve on the Karmann Ghia for 1967. Miraculously, the machine hasn't been spoiled and there are improvements in it.

As a matter of fact, there are more new tads of jazz here and touches of chrome there on the '67 KG than have been added to it over its previous 12 years of graceful existence. But they stopped short of loading on whatever would have made it all too much. And at least, they were smart enough to leave the classic Ghia shape alone.

I spent several days assessing a new KG, approaching it from a 10-year base of VW driving, four years of them in assorted Ghias, so this trial was particularly interesting. Diving immediately into the what-counts department, VW has now done for the 67 KG what true-blooded nuts have been doing to VWs for years:

- Widened rear track, by two inches (1.7 in. on the KG);
- Added a compensator effect at the rear;
- Upped the power to 53 hp by using the 1500cc Transporter engine.

These are the major changes but there are more, too. Disk brakes up front; a 12-volt electric system (yes, Gerald, 12 volts at long last); higher final drive ratio.

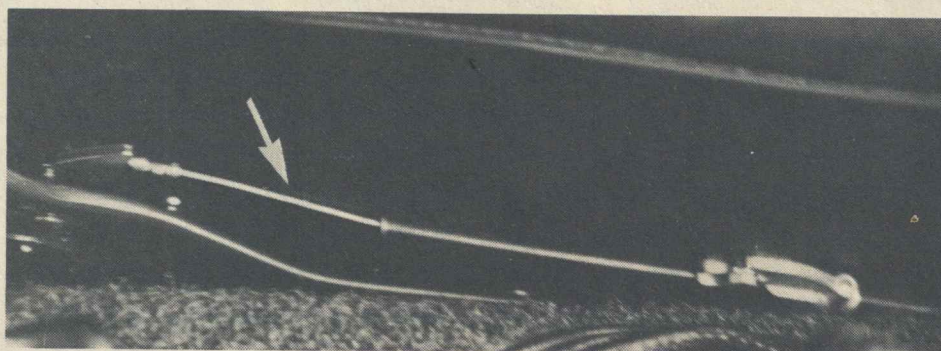
Behind the wheel, more changes show up, both when you first get in and later when you go. They've redesigned the Ghia's bucket seats with good intentions but mixed results. Abruptly rising edge sections are intended to enclose, but the ef-

LEFT AND LEFT ABOVE: The 1967 Ghia still looks like a proper Ghia since the changes are all on the inside.



ABOVE: Smaller clock and gas gauge with warning lights are the big changes.

RIGHT: Doors now latch folding seat backs as on 1600 VWs, but adjustment must be just right. Cable (arrow) controls seat back latch.



fect is more of a wedging action and unless you are ultra slim—even beyond the Pepsi generation proportions—you just don't feel properly plugged into the seats until some many miles later.

Next, you notice they've revamped the instrument layout. For Ghia buffs, it's the biggest sheet metal change since they smoothed the top line of the front fenders and reworked the tail lights. For less rabid fans, the change is straightforward. Now there's just the 120mm speedometer centered over the steering wheel. Gas gauge is left above and a now small clock is right and above.

And all round about, holy Detroit,

RIGHT: Rear tinwork, even though it covers 1500 engine, is the same as before so improvements haven't ruined the very pleasing shape of the bodywork.





ABOVE: Neat textured plastic seats took a bit of getting used to for Ghia-accustomed Benedict, but editor liked them very well.

RIGHT: Limited front luggage space has always been a VW K-G problem, but by using this extra space around spare tire, you can carry most of the tools and car-stuff you need.

## '67 VW GHIA

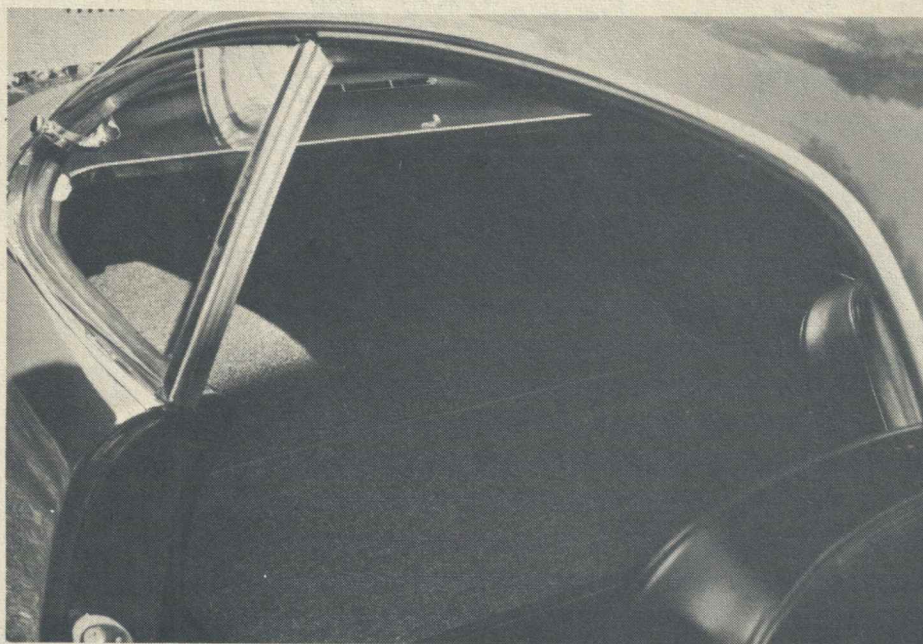
all across the dash even, they've laid over a sheet of wood-grained-like plastic. Fortunately, it's pretty fair quality as imitation wood goes and the installation on our test car was up to traditional Karmann standards. Good job, but why bother?

Lest you forget what you're driving, KG has added at top center dash a miniature of the "Karmann Ghia" signature that's graced the rear deck all these many years.

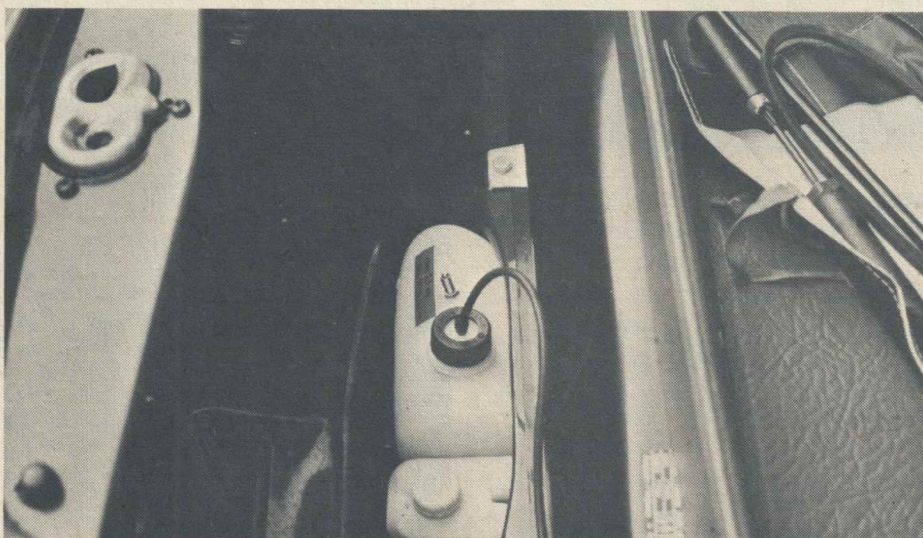
Securing the doors before startup, you notice plunger locks a la Detroit at the back of the door tops. Neat but a chore to reach.

Once you're installed and set to go, VW's seat belts are a welcome surprise. They're on ratchet reels in solidly designed reel housings mounted at the outboard rear corner of each seat. Draw 'em across your lap, push the snap catches onto a rugged, tunnel-mounted steel hoop

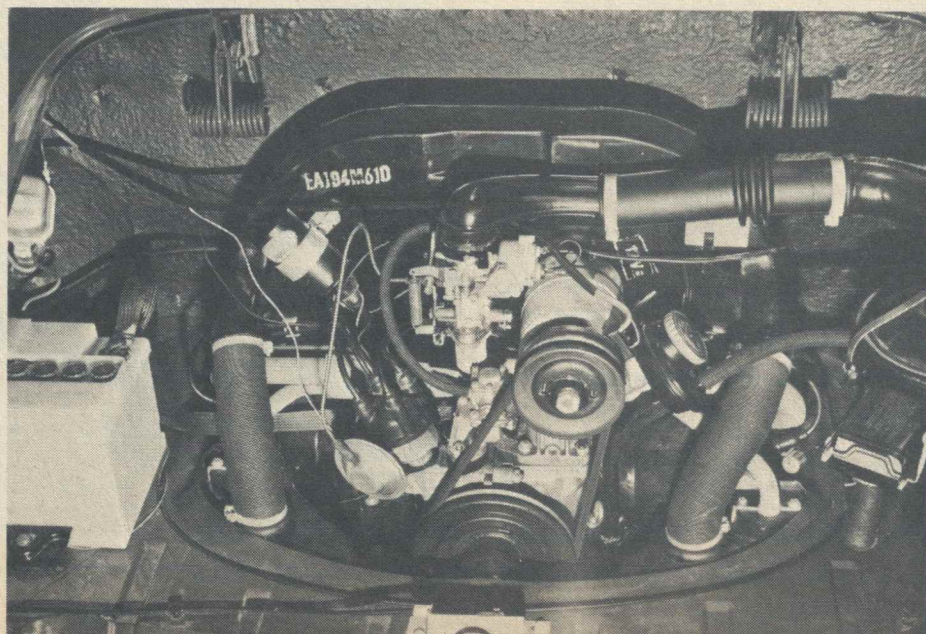
*(Continued on Page 59)*



ABOVE: With the rear seat (that's a seat?) folded, you get plenty of luggage space for two on a trip, and after all, that's what the KG is all about, anyway.



BELOW: The new engine looks about the same as the old one and should be as easy to maintain. New 12-volt battery is handier in Ghia than under Beetle's seat.



unnecessary chances to get around) but it is also a major cause of citations in Southern California unless the vehicle is in the far right lane . . . so move over.

10. IF YOU MUST STOP, GET OUT OF TRAFFIC,\* and off the freeway if possible. Everybody has problems now and then, and must stop. Many freeways have an emergency parking lane (for *emergency only*.) for these occasions. Here the small car owner has a certain advantage, for you can pull over as far as possible away from the stream of traffic. Many larger cars must stop a bare inch or so from 65 mph traffic rushing past. Once you have stopped, get out on the right hand side (or away from the traffic) and lift the hood. This is a signal to the police, who will quickly be along to give assistance. Use flares if you have them, day or night. If your emergency is legitimate (mechanical, out of gas, illness, etc.) you will not be cited. Wait for the police. It is against the law to walk along the freeway, for any reason.

11. DRIVE DEFENSIVELY, regardless of the size of your car but especially in a smaller one. There is no question that you can be hurt worse than the driver of an American bathtub in an accident.

The Indiana driver who went out of his way was wrong and actually more unsafe by going around the Hollywood Freeway. His chances for an accident were increased by the extra miles. If you are planning a trip in Southern California you will find that the freeways (or expressways in any city) will get you there quicker and safer than the surface streets will. These systems are, however, very high speed highways, heavily traveled, and must be treated as such.

Further proof the Indiana driver was wrong—Foreign Car Guide readers will probably be interested in an unofficial survey taken by this FCG reporter on a recent trip over the freeways of Los Angeles. It is commonly known that Southern California registers more small cars than any other area in the country, and on this trip more models of one particular manufacture appeared than any other make, foreign or domestic.

That's right, they were Beetle-ing along on every single freeway surveyed.

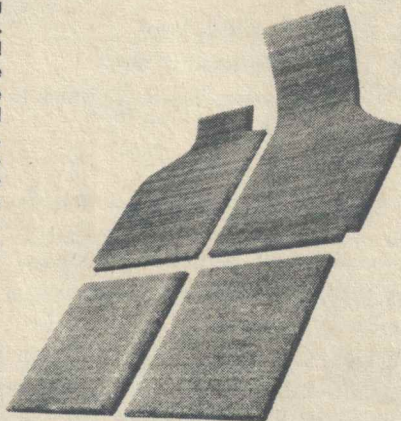
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## KARMANN GHIA

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and that's all. They retract to a snug, comfortable fit and stay snug, eliminating the loose-belt accident hazard of pelvic injury. And they have a really quick release feature, too. Simply pull on the snap's housing; it slides along the belt about a quarter inch and cams the snap open. Good for instant exit when instinct rather than conscious thought dictates your moves.

Turn the key, and attention turns from frills inside to the machinery out back and results down below. And there are results. The added HP really makes a difference, par-

ticularly in the Ghia, heaviest of the old-line VWs. You have to get out of first gear sooner than ever, and second runs out of revs faster, too. You do go faster sooner than before, but it seems that with the engine as-issued, there's still an unmistakable VW-pause at the bottom end of each gear while the machinery rebuilds revs and torque. We tried popping the clutch against high revs in a couple of test runs to see if the revs-pause could be overdriven. Not so. The revs would just die away. This feature of mild manners can still be disconcerting at a freeway on-ramp, but it's less so than ever before and is one of the characteristics that lead to 100,000-mile old VW engines, so

you pays your money and takes your choice.

I checked out suspension and control on a very special piece of back road and found the revamped suspension leaves nothing to be desired, even though it is softer for straight-away driving than in years past. The back road bit goes through a down grade S with the final leg tightening and rising; Detroit iron palsies through here with brake lights blinking at the wrong places, generally making life dreary. But I had found that—with the road quite empty—35mph in a '63' Ghia (it has an EMPI Camber Compensator) presents no problem at all going into the bottom center of the S, and well-applied gas flips the machine out the S-end at a healthy 40 mph with no sideways embarrassment at all.

So I tried the same move with the '67 Ghia. In the '67, VW has softened the springing effect of the rear trailing arm torsion bars for smushier straightaway driving. Then, to put back stiffness and restraint-of-the-machinery-under-duress, as in tight S-turn maneuvers, they applied coil spring snubbers above the swing axles. When the axles run through the soft springing of the trailing arms, snubber cups on the axle housings meet buffers at the ends of plunger arms running concentrically up through the coil springs. The effect is much like a compensator bar picking up load on a switch turn, but the hardware is mounted above, not below the axles.

In action, I was startled at first because the Ghia's rear end seemed to lift going into the S-turn; then suddenly the stiffer springing picked up and the machine snapped through the tight part of the maneuver with stability to spare. And the speedo was leaving 40 mph at the end of the turn. A net gain over the older, stiffer suspension even with a Camber Compensator.

Up front, the ball joint suspension introduced last year has been improved with better seals, reducing the chance of ball joint rust damage experienced in some early '66s.

Even better, the '67 has disk brakes in front. This should help cut down the traditional hard brake pedalling that VWers have always lived with. Sadly, our particular test machine was a shade out of adjustment and the brakes took harder work on the pedal than even my

own well worked '63. But the '67 does stop, and without any hint of wavering. Further, repeated panic stops failed to develop fade.

I even went over to a long, grubby hill that ends at a spastic traffic light. You can't tell when the light will change and when it does, a VW coming down from mid-grade really goes through a brake test. Disregarding the hard pedal work, the '67 did stop shorter and with none of the now-we're-pouring-a-little-Three-in-One-into-the-brakes feeling of old—or the chatter of out-of-round brake drums to make the sole of your right foot tingle.

Just to round things out, I took the Ghia on a cross country toot that included some Interstate highways, some dirt logging roads and run of the mill secondary county routes, all between home near sea level and a 4,000-ft. mountain pass. It was a nice afternoon's run and a good overall checkout for the newest edition of the best automotive shape around.

I stopped once last spring on the Jersey Turnpike to talk with a European type travelling briskly in a Sunbeam Tiger. The essence of his remarks: he'd done long trips in Porsches, VWs, Ghias and the Tiger; without question, he said he was better off for comfort and for balance between go, fun and ride in the Ghia than any of the others regardless of cost. And his gas mileage was better, too.

I thought of him as I topped the Cascade mountain pass and of his compound Ghia blessing by its comparison with rich cousins and other hot goodies. Sure, even with the 53 hp engine I'd been passed by sundry machinery on the way up some steep switch-backs. But how can you fault such a neat package, even if they have started calling it a Pussycat. ●

## PIGGY TO MARKET

(Continued from Page 36)

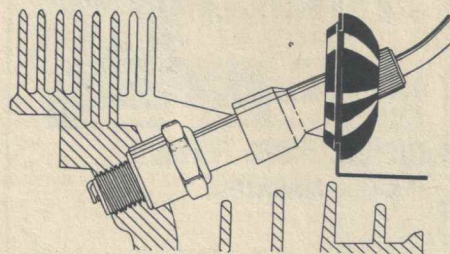
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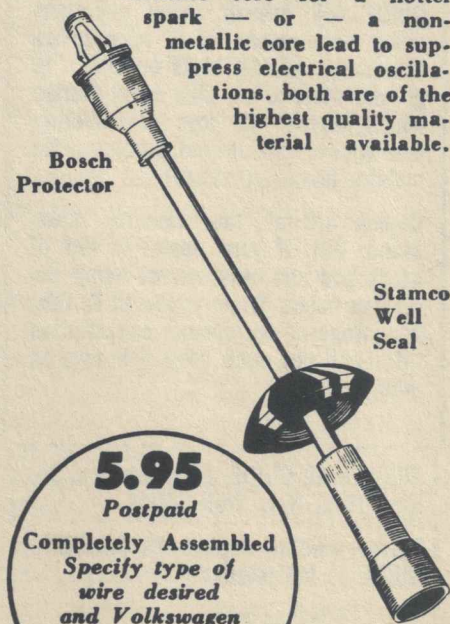
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