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Volkswagen up! 'beats' – Road Test

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Volkswagen up! 'beats' 1.0 TSI 90 3 door.

Assessed by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

The peoples' car is certainly all things to all men and women looking for a city car and considering the Volkswagen up!

Launched in the UK in 2012, the up! underwent a comprehensive revamp in 2016 and there is the promise of still more to come in 2018.



Essentially, the up! range comprises 18 models from about £9,200 to £13,000 for the 60, 75 or 90 hp petrol powered line-up with an 82 hp £25,300 electric at the top of the range and 3 or 5 door body styles, with an approximate £400 premium for the extra doors.



There are four trim levels, mostly with five-speed manual boxes, but you can order a five-speed sequential automatic if preferred with the two lower powered engines, but oddly not the most powerful.



A 115 hp 1.0 up! GTI will appear in Spring 2018 and could become *the* must have hot hatch of the next decade.

For this review we picked the currently most powerful version in its 'beats' trim, with the emphasis on entertainment. And it has a very, very good sound system for such a small car, with special interior detailing, upholstery and leather trimmed steering wheel as well as ambient lighting and start/stop fuel saving. It certainly lifts the look of the up!

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The well proven powertrain is exceptionally smooth for a triple-pot power unit, with good pulling power so long as you select the best ratios.

It's not quick off the mark but picks up well and with planning it overtakes safely and can keep up with motorway traffic while returning good economy into the 60s per gallon.

Clutch and gearchange are light and positive but on occasions I wished I had a sixth gear to reduce the engine noise at high speed.

Steering is sharp and the turning circle good for urban use without being twitchy at speed on country roads, and its assistance makes light work of heavy traffic. The brakes, too, are progressive and powerful.

I liked the position and feel of the stalks for lights and wipers, the simple fascia switches for secondary controls and the straightforward instruments' pod with the centre-dash adjustable holder for a mobile phone. It's all well thought out.

Heating and ventilation was basic but good nevertheless providing a lot of output, wide directional control and temperature selection.

The amount of oddments room was reasonable but not exceptional and the compartments were on the small or slim side for my liking.



The three-door body is not the easiest to use if you have to climb into the back and while headroom was good the rear legroom was tight and this driver found the front legroom was barely adequate for a six-footer.

The front doors opened wide and the seats were well shaped and supporting but their adjustment range was not generous and ideally suited to someone under 5ft 10 in or 1.7m. The back seats were flatter and shorter for supporting a taller person so really are for occasional use only.

In the boot there is a high sill but a sensible shape for placing items and the seatbacks fold down individually to gradually increase total capacity.





Visibility is very good and you can see all corners, with a low waistline and big glass area all around, good wipers and reasonably bright headlights.

The little up! can be encouraged along very easily and its agility and roadholding are good with a safe tendency to run wide, quickly and safely brought back on line.

For a small car it really soaks up bumps and ridges without too much complaint and only the very worst seemed to get through and shake up the driver and occupants. Its slightly soft ride did mean it rolled around tighter corners at speed but it was a delight to drive over most roads.

Even when pressed to perform the up! did show remarkable frugality with fuel and I was not far off the claimed combined figure.

What it lacked in speed it compensated with composure and sophistication, it wasn't excitable but enjoyable.



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VERDICT

A compact, economical and likeable Volkswagen.

For: Refined, economical, good handling, logical controls, compact and easy to park, quiet.

Against: Small boot and oddments space, awkward rear seat access in three door version, some cornering body-roll.

Wheels-Alive and Mini Milestones in Brief:

Volkswagen up! 'beats', 1.0 TSI 90, 3-door city car hatchback.



Price: £11,505 (£12,835 as tested).

Mechanical: Transverse 1.0 litre, three cylinder, turbo direct injection petrol 90 hp, five speed petrol.

Performance: 115 mph, 0-62 mph 9.9 seconds, 62 mpg.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 108 g/km, VED road tax £140, BiK company car tax 20%.

Insurance Group: 10E.

Warranty: Three years/ 60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacity: L 3.60 m (11.81 feet), W 1.91 m (6.27 ft), H 1.51 m (4.95 ft), bootspace: 251 - 951 litres (8.86 - 33.58 cu.ft).