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VW Polo Match Road Test

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Author: Keith Ward

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VW's Polo Match, assessed on the road by Keith Ward.

MINTED in original form more than 40 years ago, the Polo obviously had sweet appeal, tasting since then global sales of 14m-plus. In the UK it is VW's second best-seller, finding



nigh on 55,000 customers last year for a top six placing, despite the hit the German giant suffered, which is ongoing, from the emissions cheating scandal.

No mistaking the family resemblance to bigger brother Golf. Same neat lines. Match is a new trim in the Polo range, replacing the previous most popular mid-range SE and offering the incentive of more kit as standard, including cruise control, front and rear parking sensors, front fog lights with a cornering function, tinted rear windows and new 15-inch alloys: more than £900 worth of extras for a price rise of just £100, claim VW. Ours was a five-door; there's a three-door option.

But note that you are left to kit out even some higher-priced Polo versions than this with extras such as navigation, auto lights and wipers, climate control (as opposed to manual air-con on the Match) and electric glass sunroof.

Our car did sport what will appeal to many as a £125 extra: so-called Car-Net "App Connect" combining Apple, Google Android and VW's MirrorLink functions, allowing smartphone display on the car's touchscreen.

With an eye on economy and low emissions (dare we mention?) our test car came with the plucky little 999 cc, three-cylinder petrol motor seen in the smaller and lighter Up! city model. No surprise, then, to find the Polo a second slower to reach 62 mph, if that matters to you. It was here in mid-tune with 75 PS, but 60 and 110 PS options are available.

On the road the Polo so-equipped is no sprinter (0-62 in a modest 14.3 seconds) and more than once it meant pulling out of an overtaking bid on the open road for lack of breath, after being encouraged by the sheer smoothness of engine and its quick five-speed box.

While there may be more exciting drives in the Polo class, it compensates with that hallmark VW feeling of being well put together, with a suppleness of suspension, balance of steering and a stolid confidence in going about its business. There is a fair degree of noise out of town, road-sourced through the relatively small 15-inch wheels and below bonnet from that high-revving engine (peak power at 6,200 rpm).



Other Match features include (manual) air conditioning, leather-shodding for the gear lever, handbrake and the racily sawn-off steering wheel, a multi-media system with 6.5-inch, wipe-friendly colour touchscreen, DAB radio, eight-speaker audio, iPod/MP connectivity and – get this – a CD player, just when your prized collection seemed threatened with extinction in the phone-biased automotive new world. (“Well done VW”, adds Kim).



On safety, this Match comes with a driver alert system, a tyre pressure loss indicator, automatic post-collision braking against a second impact and Isofix preparation for two rear child seats.

VW’s Blue Motion “green” technology means, among other things, that braking feeds energy back into the battery.

Both front seats adjust for height and the steering column for height and reach. Legroom back and forth is ample for average adults, but the front centre console nudges the side of the driver’s left leg.

There are belts for three rear passengers and comfort for two. The boot is not the biggest in class but the floor can be set at two levels and conceals a spare wheel (another plus point for many motorists). The divided rear seats flip and fold to extend a flat boot floor to just under four feet.



VERDICT

This is a quality little runabout that could Match the desires of many a driver.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Model: VW Polo Match 1.0 75 PS BlueMotion.

Body: Five door hatch; length 3,972 mm (13.03 ft); width 1,901 mm (6.24 ft); kerb wt



1,055 kg (2,326 lb). Boot Length 699 mm (2.29 ft) extending to 1,371 mm (4.50 ft); min width 950 mm (3.11 ft); volume 280 to 952 litres (9.89 to 33.62 cu.ft).

Engine and transmission: Petrol; 999 cc; three cylinder; 12v; five speed manual gearbox; stop-start system.

Power: 75 PS @ 6,200 rpm.

Max torque: 70 lb ft (95 Nm) @ 3,000-4,300 rpm.

Performance: 0-62 in 14.3 secs, top speed 107 mph.

MPG: On test 50.2; official Combined 58.9; tank 45 litres (9.90 gallons).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 108 g/km; road tax band B; latest Euro 6 emissions; VED Nil then £20 per year; BIK 18%.

Tyres: 185/60 R15.

Insurance Group: 10E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles; 3 years paint; 12 years body; 1 year breakdown.

PRICE: £13,460; as tested with options £14,630.

Rivals: Ford Fiesta; Skoda Fabia; Renault Clio; Audi A1; MINI; Seat Ibiza.