

First Annual: Picking the Best of the Foreign Superstars

IMPORT Car of the Year

MOTOR TRENDS

The Complete Automotive Magazine

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Special Used Car Guide

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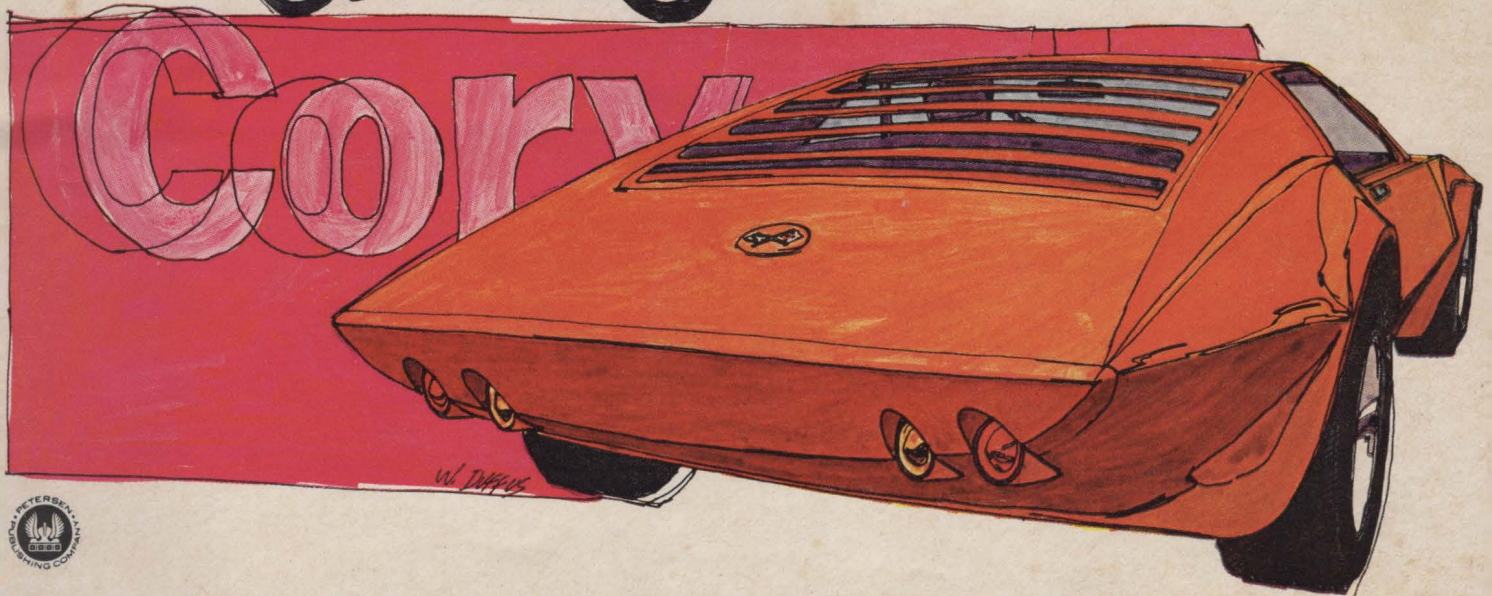
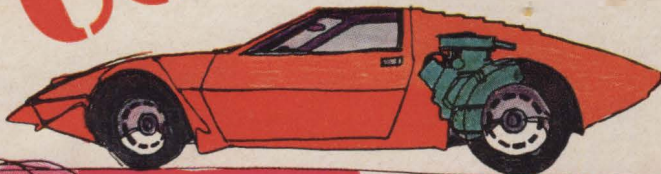
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Motor Trend's
1970 Import
Car of the Year
Porsche 914-914/6

On the map it looks like a little straight stretch before Hemet. On the road, Highway R3 is very straight and very flat and in a 914 Porsche you can run 120 indicated flat-out. We had just finished a 10-mile tangle of hairpins and reverse-camber switchbacks on our Import/Car of the Year 700-mile Ride and Drive evaluation, and

Photography Produced by Fred Enke

it felt good to slip the shift lever into 5th, watching the speedometer climb in chorus with the mechanical song behind our backs. It was almost like being in a miniature Mercedes C-111 with an open top. The wind tore at our hair and the sun came in at an angle and we knew we were into something good.

All the nominees in our First Annual Motor Trend Import/Car of the Year were good: they wouldn't have gotten here in the first place if they hadn't been. But, somehow, the Porsche was better, more relevant at its price for the task it was designed to do - carry two people across great chunks of land at almost any speed they chose to go and do it in comfort. And that is precisely what the Import/Car of the Year Award is all about - finding the imported vehicle that fulfills its destiny better for the money than any other. When we all thought about it, the CARS Panel (John Cannon, Phil Hill, and Cary Loftin, Fourth panel member Les Richter, Riverside Raceway President, had to decline participation, because of an emergency), and the staff, no matter which one of the bunch was a sentimental favorite, you had to admit the Porsche was the only really modern automobile of the lot. Small overall dimension, large passenger and luggage space, small engine but good performance, unexcelled cornering and braking capabilities and of course, mid-engine location - the new status symbol after 5-speed gear boxes. Then, there was the specter of the 125 horsepower six with its overhead cams and injection. And that's another reason why the 914s, the 4 and the 6 polled the votes. It's sort of like the Road Runner Hemi option, very few buy it but it's there just in case.

You cannot say that a 914 has the same visceral appeal as the sleek-back 911 series and yet that kind of locked-in fastback shape was of the '60s, a kind of last farewell to the good-old pre-VW II days of torpedo Pontiacs and as dead as the Dodo in an age when form must follow function. Just as the shape of the Daytona winning Porsche 917s is a matter of going fast, not looking fast, the car of the '70s will relate to the ills of our age, not aggravate them.

Somehow, the people in the small plant in Stuttgart, Germany knew this better than we or their other would-be competitors. Perhaps that is really why the Porsche won over eight fine contenders. Sure, it was one of the best handling machines any of us had ever driven, and no one faulted steering response or leg room but the car underscores better than anything else the shift in automotive design influence out of America. Here we were in one of the first contemporary vehicles of the '70s and it had nothing to do with Detroit or the UAW or Yankee ingenuity. And you know, maybe that's precisely why.

ROAD TEST

Evaluating the first modern sports car for the masses.

It's all coming back now, my dream of slipping calmly into a Formula 1 car on a starting grid somewhere in Europe, the pre-race activities storming chaotically about, bands playing, flags waving, journalists asking nonsense questions, mechanics screaming frenzied instructions trying to penetrate my cotton-stuffed ears. I adjust my goggles and helmet, check the gauges one last time. The green flag goes up, quiet consumes the fervor of prior moments. The starter jumps, cars lurch forward as their clutches engage, leaving the grid clothed in the blue haze of tire smoke, gasoline, and the acrid but sweet smells of auto racing. Monte Carlo, Spa, Nurburgring, Watkins Glen, all fall before my skillful ability in a car. Ah, the checkered flags, the victories, parties, women, even a World's Championship, they are once again vivid in my mind.

But what has stirred the spirit of my repressed, subliminal mind meanderings. The still-lingering sensations of the Porsche 914, that's what. True, it's no racer, but for a person too long accustomed to the animal *Automobilus Detroitus*, the 914 gives the very real impression of a competition machine. There's the arms-out, straight-legged driving position, super-quick steering response, five-speed gear box, and road holding qualities which seemingly stretch the law of centrifugal force. Remove the fiberglass top, and it's instant Group 7 racer.

The competition illusion does not end here. There are not 400 throbbing horsepower straining in 455 cubic inches of eight cylinders. There is no record-breaking acceleration. But, in today's auto market, a safety, pollution and insurance maze, these things are no longer relevant. What distinguishes the Porsche 914 is not its engine size or power, but its placement amidship directly behind the driver. Just like McLaren has it, right?

Many things have been said about

the 914. Some think it ugly, underpowered, overpriced. Critics have even accused it of not being a real Porsche. Perhaps these reactions are caused by our Pavlovian conditioned responses to the name Porsche, a symbol which conjures up images of sleek, fast cars that overwhelm their competitors. But whatever the car is or is not, there is a consensus on one point, the 914 is a thoroughly *modern automobile*.

There is something about the Porsche marque which creates a quickening of our senses. In a too oft used term, German automobiles have charisma, that intangible something which sets a motor car apart and makes it unique in a world filled with mass produced mediocrity. The 914 has Porsche charisma. It turns heads on the street, the sight of it compels people to make comments. Young kids point as you drive along, other motorists peer surreptitiously as you pass and maneuver easily through traffic. Maybe it's the radical idea of producing a mid-engine sports car for the middle class, or maybe it's those gold Porsche letters on the engine vent.

When evaluating this automobile, you must consider the reasons behind its design. In the 914/4, powered by a 1,679cc Volkswagen engine which, with the help of Bosch electronic fuel injection, delivers 85 hp at 4,900 rpm, Porsche engineers have tried to fill the void left by the demise of the 912 series. They have succeeded admirably. Here is a car with a west coast P.O.E. price of \$3,695 (\$3,595 on the east coast) which provides the fun of a sports car with the economy of the reliable VW. Critics claim the 914/4 is a disguised Volkswagen bearing the Porsche label. They seem to forget the 356 model of a few years back which was also VW-powered. No matter, the 914 doesn't feel remotely like any VW you have ever driven. All Porsche has done is return to an inexpensive, reliable engine and at a lower price than before. For

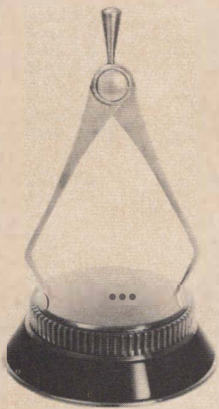
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**<f>Motor Trends
1970 Import
Car of the Year**



'Porsche 914-914/6



the more discerning enthusiast, there is the 914/6 with real Porsche power from a 1,991cc horizontally opposed six which develops 125 hp at 5,800 revs. It combines the same race car feel of its lower priced brother and has the matching performance. It also costs a Porschesque \$6,000.

Straight-line performance in the 914/4 can not be called outstanding. It is, however, adequate for most driving situations. Quarter-mile times were better than expected with a best e.t. of 18.26 seconds and 75.25 mph. The trick in getting maximum performance from the 85 hp engine is having the car in the proper gear. It soon became apparent during testing that the 914/4 is definitely controlled by gear selection with engine bog if you were one gear too high. The standard five-speed transmission helps in this narrow power-band problem but also creates a few problems. Most notable characteristic of the Porsche servo-thrust synchronized gear box was the rather vague linkage making it sometimes possible to find reverse while hunting for second or even make a power shift from first to fourth. Downshifting, thank the Lord, was somewhat better if approached with a relaxed, controlled attitude. Combined with this vague linkage were rather long shift throws which caused even the swiftest hand to lose a minimum of 1,000 revs during up-shifts. Acceleration and cruise ranges in each gear are fairly limited, as is common with most five-speeds. In defense of the 914/4's drive train, it must be said that there is a relatively wide useful rpm range but you do tend to run through it rather quickly and since there is little acceleration available below 3,000 revs in any gear, driving in congested areas can give the right arm a good going over.

The 914/6 lacked little in the way of performance, due to a 40 hp increase and only 88 additional pounds for the two extra cylinders. The 6's power emanates from the four-stroke cycle, air cooled 911 E engine. Its cast iron cylinders, light alloy heads, and forged steel crankshaft with eight main bearings provide a 3.15 x 2.60-inch bore/stroke and an 8.6:1 compression ratio. One overhead camshaft per cylinder

bank operates a conventional valve arrangement of one intake and one exhaust for each piston. In addition to its 125 hp rating, the 914/6 engine produces 131 pounds-feet of torque at 4,200 rpm. Performance of the 914/6 is typically Porsche: it won't win many drag races but watch out on those road circuits. Its best quarter-mile time was 16.05 seconds with a speed of 85.55 mph. Besides the additional horsepower inherent in the 6's engine, a more positive shift linkage helped the car's performance. Unlike the 4, the 914/6 exhibits an ease of shifting surpassed by few cars. The throws are still rather long, but since the gears are easy to find, rpm loss is minimal. Problems still occur in downshifts, especially from fourth when you can end up in fifth. The whole thing takes getting used to but once mastered, the 6's linkage is positive with easy-to-find gear slots. And, there is little right arm fatigue when driving in heavy traffic.

Go power of both 914s is matched by exceptional stopping power. Both cars are equipped with four-wheel disc brakes and combined with the 914's light weight (around 2,000 pounds) braking is fast, sure, and straight. Dual brake systems on both models operate the discs with the 6 featuring internally vented front brakes. The 4 has a front/rear disc diameter of 11/11.1 inches while the 6's brakes have diameters of 11.12 and 11.26 inches. In our panic-stop tests from 30 and 60 mph, the 914/4 halted in 22 feet and 127.5 feet respectively. No wheel correction was needed and the brake balance was so perfect that all four brakes locked simultaneously. Braking action in the 6 was almost a duplicate of the 4 except that distances were a trifle shorter. Once again the automobile displayed a stability which is hard to believe although the right side brakes locked a little sooner due to the driver's weight.

Stories of Porsche handling are almost as old as the Greek Myths and sometimes as fraught with Homeric imagination. The 914 does not disappoint this living legend. The car is so stable, so flat in cornering, that you want to go quicker and quicker each time until you either exceed the ma-

chine's limit or your own and usually the latter occurs first. Just how much effect the mid-engine design has on the 914's handling is hard to tell, although there is definitely less unsprung weight than on other cars. The near equal front/rear weight distribution of 45/55 percent doesn't hurt either. Front suspension of the 914 is straight from the 911 sans anti-roll bar. Components of the independent suspension include transverse control arms, telescopic hydraulic dampers, and longitudinally mounted round section bars, one per wheel. Rear suspension is all new due to the engine placement. It is independent with longitudinal control arms, coil springs, and hydraulic double-acting telescopic shock absorbers.

If you are accustomed to American sedans, the 914's ride will probably strike you as firm. Every small bump and road roughness is transmitted to the passenger compartment and the spine-tingling sensation of hitting a rather large dip or bump will satisfy the discerning sports car purist.

Basically, the 914's steering is neutral and extremely sensitive with the ZF rack and pinion system claiming a 17.78:1 ratio. At low and moderate speeds the slightest steering wheel deflection sends the car off in a new direction. In higher speed ranges this wheel sensitivity diminishes somewhat but still no effort is required to steer the automobile. With no engine up front to exert undo weight on the wheels, you get the impression of power steering without losing the feel of the road surface. Due to its size, 96.5-inch wheelbase, and quick steering response, the 914 is extremely maneuverable in traffic, a definite plus when travelling in congested downtown areas or on crowded freeways. Quite often this maneuvering ability will raise the ire of other motorists who curse enviously as you slip serenely into traffic slots they wouldn't dare try. One improvement the 914 demonstrated over other Porsches was its stability in the wind. Unlike the 911 which was buffeted about, the 914 experienced no severe effects due to winds and also did not hop from rut to rut at any speed.

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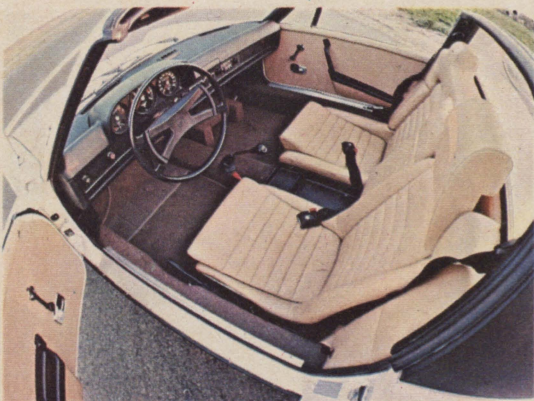
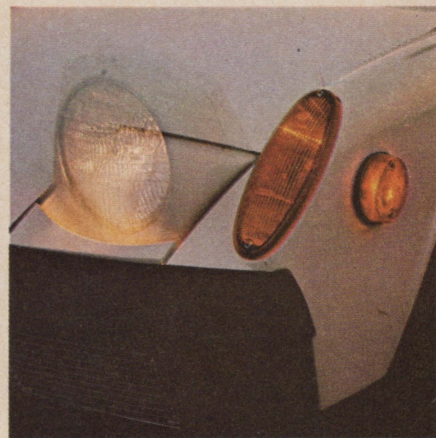
CHASSIS SPECS

Transmission: 5-speed. Final Drive Ratio: 4.429:1. Steering Type: ZF rack and pinion. Steering Ratio: 17.78:1. Turning Diameter: 36.1 ft. curb-to-curb. Wheel Turns: 25 lock-to-lock. Tire Size: 155 SR 15 tubeless - 165 HR 15 with tube (914/6). Brakes: 4-wheel discs. Front Suspension: Independent, transverse control arms, telescopic hydraulic dampers. Rear Suspension: Independent, longitudinal control arms. Body/Frame Construction: Welded, unitized. Wheelbase: 96.5 ins. Overall Length: 157.0 ins. Width 65.0 ins.

SPECIFICATIONS	914	914/6
Engine	Pushrod opposed 4 air cooled	SOHC opposed 6 air cooled
Bore and Stroke	3.54x2.60 ins. (90x66 mm)	3.15x2.60 ins. (80x66 mm)
Displacement	1023 c.i. (1679cc)	1215 c.i. (1991cc)
Horsepower	85 (SAE) @ 4900 rpm	125 (SAE) @ 5800 rpm
Torque	109 (SAE) @ 2800 rpm	131 (SAE) @ 4200 rpm
Compression ratio	8.2:1	8.6:1
Carburetion	Bosch fuel injection	2 triple throat carbs
Height	48.0 ins.	48.4 ins.
Front track	52.8 ins.	53.6 ins.
Rear track	54.3 ins.	54.5 ins.
Curb weight	1982 lbs.	2070 lbs.
Fuel capacity	164 U.S. gallons	164 U.S. gallons
Oil capacity	3.75 qts.	9.5 qts.

PERFORMANCE

	914	914/6
Acceleration		
0-30 mph	4.0 secs.	3.3 secs.
0-45 mph	7.55 secs.	5.3 secs.
0-60 mph	12.4 secs.	8.4 secs.
0-75 mph	18.2 secs.	12.5 secs.
Standing start (quarter mile)		
	18.26 secs.	16.05 secs.
	75.25 mph	85.55 mph
Passing speeds		
40-60 mph	6.2 secs.	3.7 secs.
50-70 mph	8.2 secs.	4.8 secs.
Speeds in gears		
1st	30.06 mph	N.A.
2nd	50.05 mph	N.A.
3rd	75.0 mph	N.A.
4th	86.0 mph	N.A.
5th	90.0 mph	N.A.
MPH per 1000 rpm (in top gear)		
	27.2 mph	N.A.
Stopping distances		
From 30 mph	22.0 ft.	21.6 ft.
From 60 mph	127.6 ft.	127.1 ft.



The Porsche 914 can be anything you want it to be. Make it a racer, for real or pretend, and take on your favorite road. Make it fast, make it slow, it's a very forgiving car. It only seems to require that you enjoy yourself.

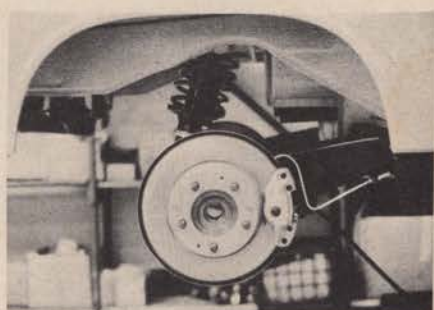
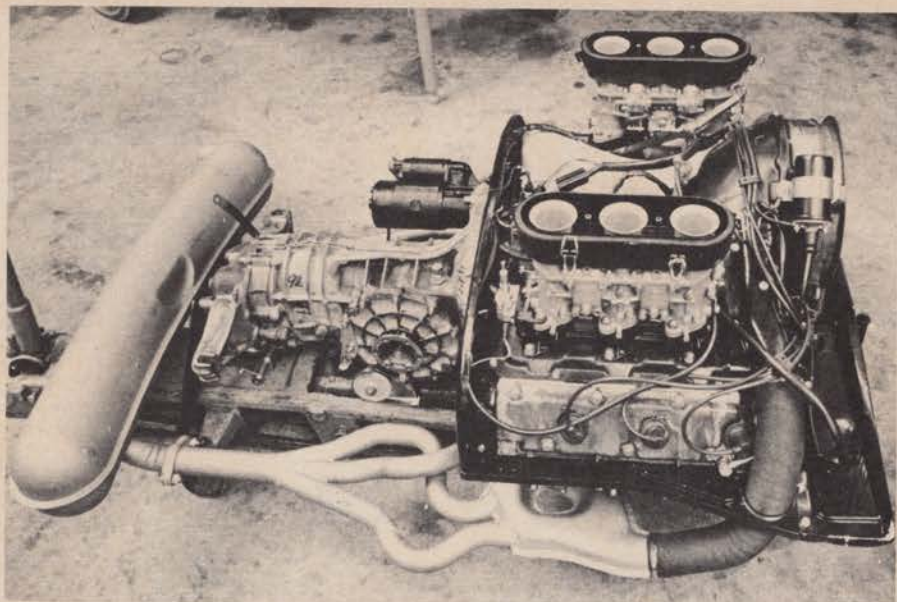
*Motor Trend's
1970 Import
Car of the Year*



Porsche 914-914/6

Motor Trend's 1970 Import Car of the Year Porsche 914-914/6

914/6 engine is 125 hp 2-liter six with triple throat Webers. Front suspension (right) has strut located by A-arm. Rear suspension (far right) uses trailing arms, shock/coils.



The mid-engine Porsche is one of the few contemporary mechanical designs on the market as we start the '70s.

ENGINEERING

With all of their experience with rear-engine cars, it would make sense that when the time came to mass-produce a mid-engine car, Porsche would do it. It would also make a lot of sense that when the time came to build that car, and price became a big factor, they should dip heavily into the parts bin of their now-official ally, VW. Weren't Porsches originally VW-powered specials to begin with? And that old Porsche Normal engine looked an awful lot like its then unofficial brother VW. So first off, no comments like "is it really a Porsche with that V-dub engine?" It is, and more than a few so-called mid-range sports cars should be so lucky as to be able to borrow a few parts from an organization like VW.

While you notice things on the Porsche 914, like the door handles and hub caps that seem to have had the VW routed from the center of the mold, that smack of VW, the big contribution from the Wolfsburg people is the engine. At 1679cc (or 102.4 cubic inches, if you prefer) the flat-4 power plant is straight from VW's large, but as yet unimported (sometime this fall) 411LE sedan. The "E," incidentally, stands for *einspritzer*, more Americanly fuel injection, more specifically the electronic Bosch-VW unit, a "little black box" metering system that adds together factors like temperature, engine load, and the like, and computes exactly how and when the fuel should be distributed to the cylinders, helping the engine start easily and run smoothly, regardless. With cast iron cylinders, alloy heads, and gear-driven

camshaft, push rods, and rocker arms, the unit puts out 85 hp at 4,900 rpm and 78.1 lbs.-ft. of torque at 3,700 rpm.

Big brother, the 2-liter 914/6, borrows straight from Porsche and last year's 911T, whose engine has now been boosted to 2.2 liters. A bit more exotic with aluminum heads, single overhead cam, and dry sump lubrication, the flat-6 pumps out 125 hp at 5,800 rpm for what should be a significant increase in performance, but also at an extra \$2,100. Oh, and remember when fuel-injection was the big performance option? Well, the 914 leaves the smog-riding injection for the 4 only and drops a pair of triple-throated Webers on the 6.

The straight 914s will all be completely put together by Karmann, who is constructing all the bodies for the cars. In the case of the 914/6, the body shell will be shipped to Porsche who will add suspension and running gear and then finish the car off.

Initially, when you pull the little handle to the left of the driver's seat and the narrow engine compartment hatch behind the Targa-type rollbar thunks open, you chuckle, thinking, well, they've finally done it; made a car with an engine you can't get at. In reality, all normal maintenance can be performed through the opening, including the 12,000-mile check-ups. And what that arrangement does for trunk space, both fore and aft, is encouraging to the point of laughter. Many pony cars should do so well.

Regardless of powerplant or its accessibility, we have to get all that pow-

er to the ground and the same 5-speed transaxle does it for both engines. Ratios for the 6 have been stretched in 2nd and 3rd and a shorter 5th added, taking advantage of the 6's better winding ability. The big-engined cars will be offered from the start with Porsche's Sportomatic semi-automatic transmission and somewhere around June or July you might try begging for one on the 4.

The 914s use a unitized body-chassis, beginning with a floor platform, adding bulkheads fore and aft of the passengers. Up front the platform continues on to accommodate the front suspension and in the rear, just past the bulkhead (which also contains the rollbar), the platform gives way to two side rails to which are eventually mounted both engine-transaxle and rear suspension. Torsional rigidity is high, equal to the 911 coupe, and higher — now get this — than the 911 Targa series. Porsche engineers feel the chassis is good for up to 150 hp. Could that mean...?

As would seem the case by comparing front profiles, the Porsche 914 is not as aerodynamically slick as the 911s, but because of its smaller cross section, their drag is very similar.

Suspension in front is borrowed directly, sans anti-rollbar, from the 911. This would mean a McPherson strut-type located on the bottom with an A-arm, and with the shock absorber strut angled up and in. A torsion bar does the springing and is mounted between the inside of the A-arm and the

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Motor Trend's 1970 Import Car of the Year

Porsche 914-914/6

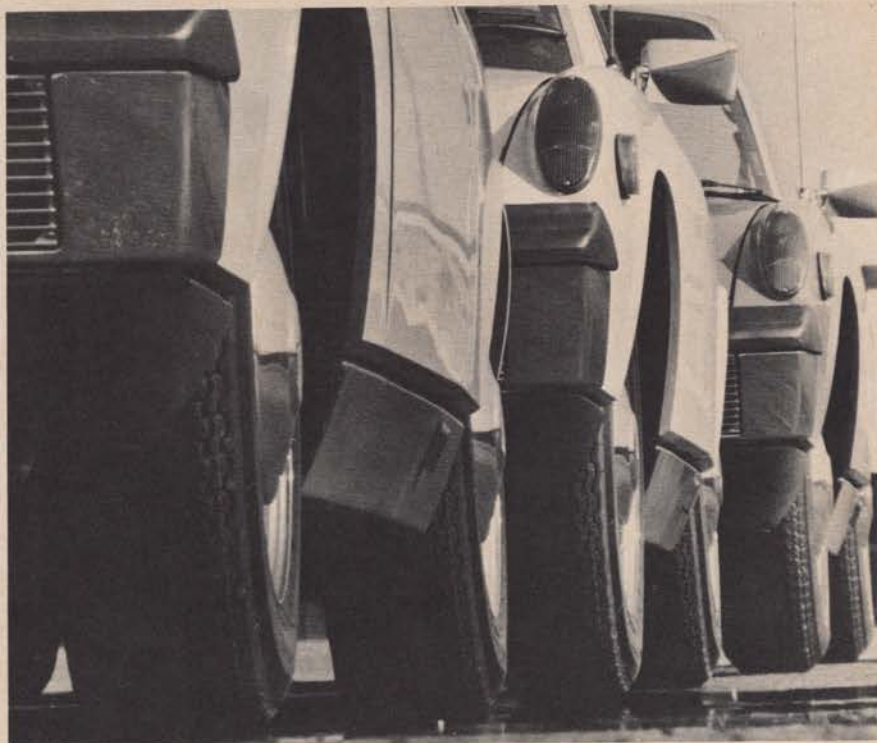
Porsche is still wholly owned by the family but their cars are marketed by VW's vast organization and that means there's going to be an awful lot of 914s around.

MARKETING

Now we've got this very neat little car. It goes well, handles superbly, has a low price, and THE name for a sports car. The next problem is to market it. To be realistic, there will probably never be a marketing problem. Distribution maybe, marketing no. The Porsche 914 was priced, marketed, and sold the day before production began. There will be no need for consumer education, either: anyone who has ever parked a 914 at a supermarket can tell you the people already know about it. They want it. The only problem will be getting it.

Last year Porsche entered into a marketing/engineering agreement with Volkswagen who had just bought control of Audi-NSU. Porsche would enjoy VW's world-wide organization to disburse their finely crafted sports cars and VW would have access to Porsche's super engineering staff for development/prototype work. More than that, Porsche would equip its 914s mostly with VW engines—the powerplant Wolfsburg created for their 411 model. In the U.S., Volkswagen of America, which is still the funnel through which all VW-Porsche products flow, decided that it was best to now separate the familiar old VW-Porsche dealer. The VW is an economy car and they want it left that way. The Porsche is an expensive (in comparison) sports car and should rightly have its own place in the sun. So VW of America went to their VW-Porsche dealers and said they would have to decide for VW or Porsche or split their dealership in two and have one location for VW, one for Porsche. No more of this under-the-same-roof-stuff. To make life easier for the Porsche man, he was given the Audi, making him a Porsche-Audi man.

Last October 1, Porsche-Audi made the paper switch from VW and on



November 1 (I keep wondering what they did for that month), began establishing new dealers, worrying about delivery routes and dates, wondering where they would keep all those spare parts. A monumental task to begin with, until you remember they still have VW of America behind them, a firm whose organizational powers have been so successful its story will bore first year marketing students to death for years to come.

In late January, a few 914s trickled in to let the dealers know the car actually existed, remembering all this time all they had to live on were \$6,500 and up 911s and you don't sell enough of those to eat unless you live in Southern California (40 percent of all Porsches sold last year and 80 percent of all Porsches registered are in Southern California). February, and more cars arrive, ready to go to purchasers who put down deposits sight unseen months earlier. March and still more arrive with a very light sprinkling of 914/6s. April and things appear as though they might someday become normal. Porsche-Audi lives.

On the showroom floor there's no hard sell. There doesn't have to be. There can't be when you're in a position to sell more cars than you can get. A customer's car comes in, the wrong color. Call the guy and tell the sad news, but he doesn't care, to heck with the color, he wants his new 914. When can he pick it up? Now.

A customer has two choices: order or buy from stock (or what *will* be stock). If he orders his car specially, waiting time is around 3 months. If he orders from stock, chances are good he can get just what he wants. The option list isn't that long. The dealer, in turn, gets his cars from the regional distributor who already has a pretty good idea of what the customers' desires are and has ordered

cars accordingly and along guidelines established by VW of America.

Then it's a matter of getting the cars. Before the VW-Porsche tie-in, Porsches weren't shipped with VWs, often leaving the Porsches in something less than concours condition. Now they're all shipped together to various unloading points around the country and shipped inland by car carrier. Then it's on to the dealer.

The dealer and his showroom, where right now the big option on the 914 is wheels and tires. Americans don't seem to go for the stock item; it's neither big nor shiny enough. So many distributors have had to go in search of a bigger, shinier wheel, putting together a combination of Porsche center section and U.S. rims. After that it's tinted glass or the leather option. Radios are either factory or dealer installed. And except for various interior/exterior color combinations, that runs the gamut of options.

You're not going to be seeing a lot of 914 advertising in the next 6 to 8 months, mainly because, as we said, the car is already virtually sold and the division has that other car, the very fine Audi, to tell the public about. Perhaps after the 914/6s and Sportomatic models become a bit more available, there will be a bigger push.

You really have to admire Porsche and VW, not just for their cars, but their thinking. In the early 1960s the cost of a Porsche, be it the Normal or Super 90 model, ranged in the area of \$4,000 to \$4,600. Up until the 914s, the only Porsches available were the \$6,000 and dearer 911 series. Now they've taken us back to the early '60s, cost wise, and have not only saved us money, but offered a faster, better handling car that's just as revolutionary as the Porsche Normal of the early '60s. Guess Porsche just never heard of inflation. /MT



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PORSCHE ROAD TEST

continued

High speed cornering in the 914 is an enjoyable experience with mild doses of over and understeer evident on occasions although the basic cornering characteristics are neutral. As long as you enter a turn at the proper speed, the car reacts as commanded and does so quite willingly. If, however, the corner is entered in an underpowered attitude, the 914 will plow past the point of entry only to recover when the proper amount of power is added. Oversteer of a very gentle and controllable nature was encountered when really pushing the car. With no weight directly over any of the wheels they would smoothly lose adhesion in unison sending the car into a confident and predictable drift. There was none of the rear end whipping movements so common in other Porsches once they reach the limit of adhesion. Even if a driver did something really stupid, up to and including hitting the brakes in a turn, the 914 would initially get out of shape but then return to the proper line when the mistake was corrected. It is a most forgiving car. With the 6, cornering became a real pleasure, bordering on ecstatic since you could enter and exit a turn faster. The automobile's cornering ability, according to Porsche-Audi Competition Director Richie Ginther, is on a par with the 911S.

Styling is a strictly personal thing, either you like the 914's looks or you don't. People say the car grows on them mostly after seeing it in traffic; it is one of few automobiles ever made that looks better moving than standing still. Without a doubt, the automobile is distinctive and difficult to miss. Obviously the 914's design was born out of necessity to provide the maximum of looks, side and rear visibility, and maximum "air-wash" through the engine compartment for cooling. The three are not always compatible. The unique-looking basket-handle roll bar is probably the main cause of styling dissatisfaction. It appears somewhat truncated and abrupt and maybe could have been made a little more streamlined without seriously hampering side vision. However, with the top removed, the roll bar is not as objectionable as before and when the flip-up headlamps are turned down the 914's body lines are smooth and really contemporary. It boils down to the fact that the 914 is not only engineered as a modern vehicle but styled as one as well, a rare commodity in America today.

Interior appointments are spartan in the best Porsche tradition. The dashboard is totally dominated by a huge tachometer with the speedometer on one side and fuel gauge on the other. Unfortunately, in the 914/4 there are only idiot lights to indicate oil pressure and engine temperature. In the 6 this problem was partially alleviated by installing a temperature gauge but retained the oil light. A two-speaker radio is placed in mid-dash fashion and can be reached only by the passenger unless the driver wishes to throw a shoulder

out of joint. Heating and ventilation controls are located close to the driver and do their duties with the utmost efficiency.

Seating comfort in the 914 is exceptional for a car so small. Even a person over 6 feet can assume an arms-out driving position and be able to sit straight-legged. Apparently European designers recognize the fact that some people are taller than 5 feet 8 inches, a concept more American auto makers should adopt. Only the driver's seat is adjustable fore and aft with a movable foot stool provided for short-legged passengers. Although leg and lower back support is good, the driver's seat also tilts to provide more. One disappointing factor of the seating situation in the Porsche, and true in most new cars, is the mobility-limiting seat-belt arrangement. An inertia-controlled harness would be a definite improvement.

With the engine placed directly behind the seat we expected excessive engine noise. While there is a little at low speeds, highway driving is surprisingly quiet with only a gentle hum generated by the motor. Most noise emanates from the wind and even it isn't too bad unless, of course, the top is removed.

Luggage capacity in the 914 has got to be one of the modern wonders of the world. Since there is no engine to occupy either front or rear, both are reserved for trunk space. Two people would find it difficult to pack enough things to completely fill the separate compartments. Even with the top off and stored neatly on its brackets in the rear trunk, there is still enough room for three suitcases. The front compartment contains the gas filler, spare tire, and space for more luggage.

So there you have it, the Porsche 914, a first of a kind automobile. With other mid-engine cars designed for you and me due on the market shortly, Porsche has beat its competition to the punch. Incorporating a progressive engineering philosophy based on racing, economical operation and fun driving, the 914 is the modern motor car, hopefully a harbinger of things to come. And don't be surprised if, after driving one, you wake up at night kissing an imaginary race queen and accepting plaudits on your first nine. The Porsche 914 can do things like that to you. /MT



ENGINEERING

continued

forward bulkhead/firewall extension.

The rear suspension is brand new for the 914 with a single trailing arm (as opposed to the 911's 2-piece unit). The arms run straight back, rather than at an angle as on the 911s, to minimize camber changes. It also makes toe-in and camber adjustments for the street or track quick and easy and allows the use of wider tires without major surgery than on the 911s. Again no anti-roll bar is used, Porsche feeling that a good suspension doesn't need one, and Bogie coil-shocks do the dampening. Interestingly enough, the halfshafts are the same as on the 911.

VW's 411 also comes up with the brakes for the 914/4, with 11.0-inch diameter discs in front and 11.1-inch in the rear. The 914/6 goes to the 911 series for 11.1-inch internally vented discs up front and 11.2-inch solid units in back. A well-balanced proportioning valve decides just what hydraulic fluid is going where and when. Steering is of the rack and pinion sort, with an overall ratio of 17.8:1, three turns lock-to-lock. All of which means you'd better have a street 34 feet 1-inch wide or wider before making a nonstop U-turn.

All put together, the 914 weighs in around 2,075-2,100 pounds plus whatever you'll contribute personally. Weight distribution runs in the area of 45 percent front, 55 percent rear, with these figures coming close to equal with spare tire and gas. Design of the car, incidentally, drops the center of gravity 1 inch below that of the 911's. All of which means that, with its standard radial tires, the 914 will corner at .88-.90g on XAS Michelins as opposed to .82-.85g for the 911 on its optional 185-15s. Add a set of racing tires and the figures range up to .93g. More important for anyone who ever got confused, crossed-up, and crashed as his front-engine car slid from understeer to oversteer in a downpour, the 914's change is far less dramatic and at a much more understandable rate.

Quite an engineering bundle, especially for a base price around \$3,600. It would appear that while ride, handling, gearbox, and quality are all Porsche, value per dollar is all VW. /MT



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