

Subtle but Effective



THE SPEC SHEET:
REVO VW GOLF MK5 TSI

ENGINE >> Four-cylinder, petrol, supercharger and turbocharger CAPACITY >> 1390cc MAX POWER >> 208bhp @ 5600rpm MAX TORQUE >> 200lb ft @ 1750rpm 0-62mph >> 7.5 seconds (estimated) TOP SPEED >> 140mph (estimated) WEIGHT >> 1429kg PRICE >> £460 plus the donor car

WE LIKE >> A wolf in sheep's clothing, it really is great value

WE DISLIKE >> Not a hot hatch as such

VERDICT >> As conversions go, this one is pretty faultless

Revo's Golf 1.4 promises to be a wolf in sheep's clothing, with GTI rivalling power. Words: Chris Knapman Photography: Max Earey

It has become a personal habit to approach the witchcraft of ECU manipulation with a hint of trepidation. It's not that I suspect people would fib about such matters, but rather to say that they quite conceivably could. After all, were somebody to give you a flash sports car, say a 911 Turbo, with a claimed 650bhp would you honestly have the confidence to suggest that they were telling porkie pies, and that in fact it felt to you much more like a mere 600bhp machine? When numbers get that big, does it even matter? In some cases, I'd wager not. Figures can be plucked from thin air, the only vindication they need is for a customer to sign on the dotted line.

Cynicism? Sadly, not always. However, like a beacon of light on a stormy winter's night there are a handful of companies that do this whole code-breaking thing properly. Companies that leave you marvelling at what can be achieved with a laptop and some knowledge. One such operation is Revo Technik. You might remember that we recently drove its awesome Leon Cupra (PC March 09), a car that strides around with 360bhp in its trousers.

The company has now turned its attentions to the

Golf 1.4, which on the outside is about as plain Jane as they come; plain wheels, plain bodywork, plain badging. To call it subtle is an understatement. However, somebody very clever at Revo has told this car that it doesn't have the 140bhp that VW delivered it with, but rather that it carries 208bhp. And the car believed them!

And at last we have figures that are recognisable in isolation, for we know all too well what 200bhp in a Golf feels like, and it is tangibly different to what 140bhp in a Golf feels like.

I slip into the cabin not sure what to expect. All is plain in here too, the engine starts in a plain kind of way, the dials are plain Mk5. It's a perfectly pleasant thing to drive at low speed – plain but pleasant. However, when you work the engine it's clear that Revo's hypnosis hasn't been wasted. Somehow this Golf is all fire and fury when you give it some stick, pulling strongly from low down, strongly through the mid-range and only tailing off right at the top of its abilities. It is, unquestionably, the performance of a 208bhp car, which is extraordinary from 1.4 litres.

How so? According to somebody much cleverer than me, it's all about maps, parameters and

tolerances, and working within them to extract the most an engine can offer. In the case of this twincharger that equates to the aforementioned GTI-esque power output along with 200lb ft of torque (up from 162lb ft). And, Revo assure us, it won't blow up – or rather it can't. That's because every safety tolerance remains intact, every component tested to see what it can stand. This is fine-tuning of the twincharger concept that appears a step ahead of the factory itself. Even the switchover from supercharger to turbo is handled with smoothness; the signal from the driver's seat nothing more than a nanosecond pause followed by a hardening of engine note. And all this for the price of a £460 engine remap, one that it should be pointed out, can't be detected by dealer diagnostic equipment.

This is, however, no GTI on the cheap. There's no hot hatch pretensions at work; no sports suspension, no big brakes, no flash wheels, and the engine doesn't rev with quite the same conviction. Rather, this is a very fast hatch with a comfortable ride, subtle looks and the ability to return 45mpg. Revo might just have turned a 1.4-litre Golf into the Q-car of the Noughties **PC**

There's not much to show for the extra 68bhp but rest assured this is no ordinary TSI

