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Plus: Interview with Jon Abbott; Club-built race car project pt6

June 2008
\$3.99 US\$5.25





Missing Split

Claus Missing is a dedicated vintage VW enthusiast from Germany and owns some of the finest examples of Split-window-era cars in Europe. His 1951 Beetle is a popular sight at shows such as Hessich-Oldendorf and Bad Camberg

Words: Keith Seume Photos: Mike Key

You just know that anyone who dedicates a website to his own projects is likely to be pretty hardcore, but when you read the introduction to Claus's web pages, it's obvious that the word 'hardcore' only begins to scratch the surface: *'My name is Claus Missing and I live in Kaarst near Düsseldorf. My first Volkswagen was a Beetle from 1967. In 1989 I bought my 1963 export Beetle from first hand. I put many accessories from the sixties in the car like a Judson supercharger.'*

'Four years later, I bought an untouched but wrecked Karmann Kabriolett from 1952. The car was in very bad condition. The restoration of this car was much more work than I thought. After twelve years, I finished the restoration in spring 2005, exactly two weeks before the meeting in Hessisch Oldendorf!'

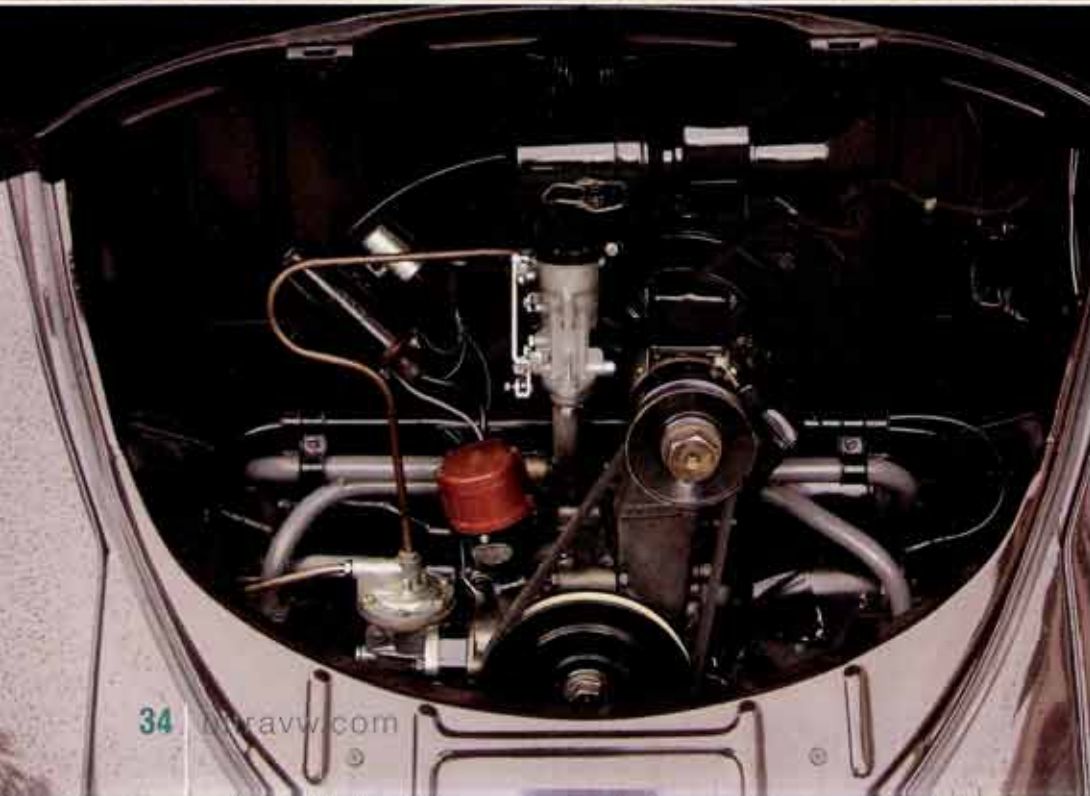
'In spring 2004 I bought another '51 Karmann! An unbelievable car with original roof, seats, fenders, 67,000km and lots of rare Split accessories. You will also find pictures of my 1951 export Split and my new unrestored 1966 Westfalia SO-44 Dormobile.'

The introductory text contains links which,

when 'clicked', lead you to photo upon photo of the most amazing restoration work you've ever seen. Don't believe us? Trust me, anyone who takes on a basket-case 1952 Karmann Cabrio project like Claus's demands respect!

Claus didn't start on the road to vintage VW heaven with a super-early car, but chose, instead, to begin with a 1960s sedan. 'I bought my 63 Export beetle in 1989, from the first owner,' explains Claus. 'It had covered just 120,000 kilometres. The old owner drove the car only at dry weather and when it was raining, he went to work by train! The car had never been welded and has still got the original seats. In the 1980s, the car was repainted because the old man had polished it too much. After I bought the car, I changed some chrome parts and restored the engine. Over the years, I have added various VW accessories, such as a Judson supercharger.'

The Karmann Cabriolet that came next was terrible – there is no other word to describe it, for every single panel was rusted or damaged in some way. Early Cabrios are notoriously hard (read: expensive) to restore properly and it's not a job for the faint-hearted. 'I bought the '52 Karmann in 1993 – it had come from





the original roof. The seats were also original and in very good condition. Fortunately, the car was also still fitted with the original bonnet, decklid and wings. The first owner bought all the accessories which were available from VW in the early '50s. Then, in the 1970s, he installed a set of blinkers and then repainted the car in its original colour. It had covered just 65,000 kilometres on its original engine. When I finished this project I sold it to my friend Alexandre, in France.

We at *Ultra VW* have known of this car for many years, and recall it being one of the first – and best – Split-window restorations ever seen in France. The first time we set eyes on it was at the prestigious *Retromobile* show in Paris, where it formed part of a display hosted by Jacky Morel and *Super VW* magazine. It went on to become a regular sight at European shows in the 1990s.

Claus continues: 'My VW collection was still missing a nice Split-window Beetle. Then, because of a lack of storage space, Alexandre, who bought my green '51 Karmann, decided to sell his beautiful 1951 Split-window. This was my chance to buy a fully-restored Split!

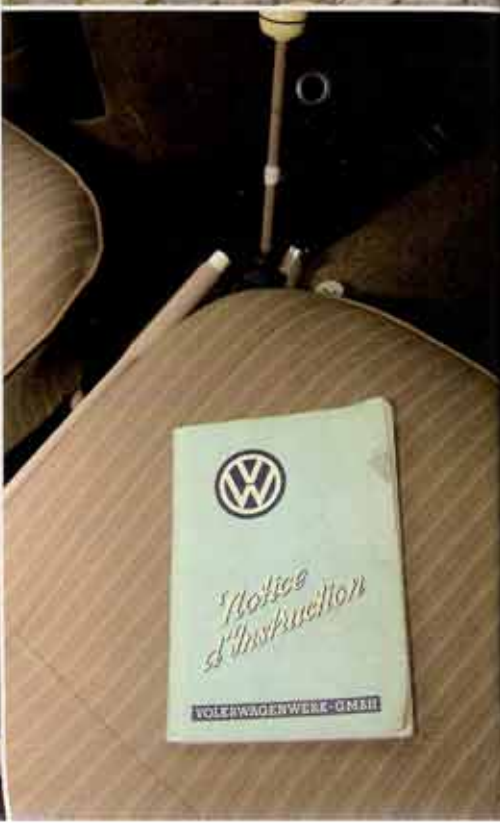
'The car originally came from a VW dealer in Brussels. Jean-Pierre Brassens, ex-president of the French vintage VW club, restored the car in the 1990s. Apart from other work, the car got a new paintjob in the original Chestnut Brown and had the interior retrimmed using new seat material from Ingrid Oppenheim in Germany. The car was very sound and there was just a

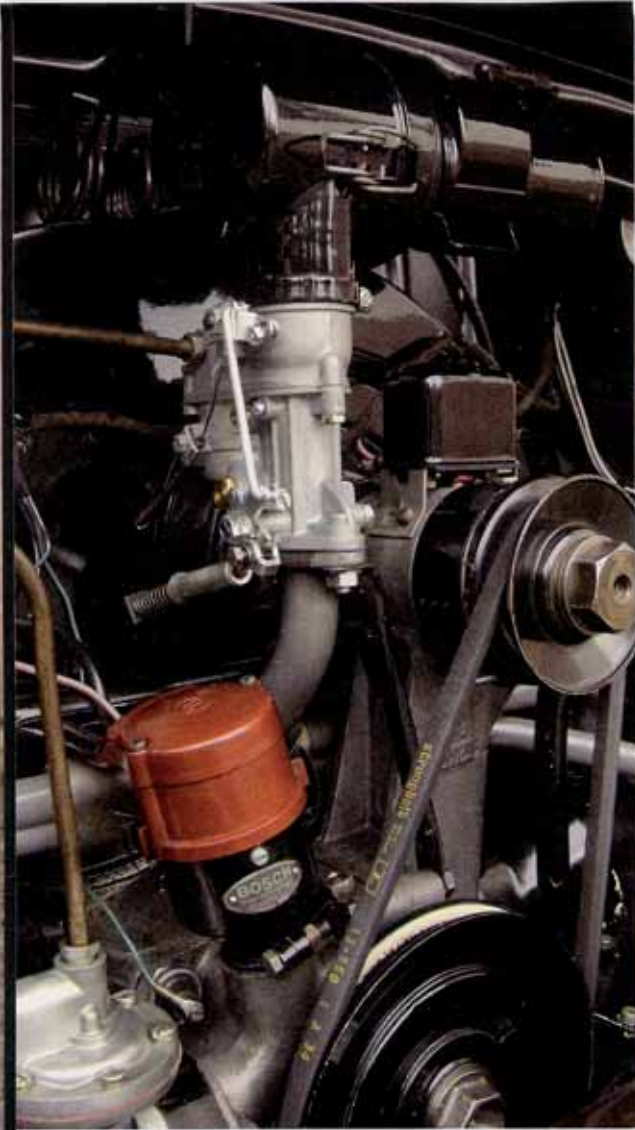
► **Chestnut Brown is one of our favourite colours for a Split-window Beetle. It perfectly complements the brown wool interior**

▼ **Interior was retrimmed using cloth supplied (and woven) by Ingrid Oppenheim in Germany. Accessory radio is right at home in the perfectly-detailed dashboard**

Kaufbeuren in south Germany. It was unrestored and still wore its original paint and was nearly complete. In fact, only a few small parts and the interior mirror were missing, but the car was in really bad condition. The rust had made a good job! Everybody who saw the car said that I was stupid to do a project like this, and they were probably right! Claus goes on to say, modestly: 'In fact, the hardest job was finding the original interior mirror. After eight years I got it from Dirk Baginski. He found the mirror in a junkyard in Austria! It took me a total of 12 years to complete the project, just in time for Hessich-Oldendorf in 2005.'

Claus is clearly a glutton for punishment for, before he'd even completed the '52 Cabrio, he bought a 1951 version! The car was purchased from the original owner and still had





▲ **Factory accessory air-filter tops off the perfectly restored engine. It's the original and has covered just 66,000 kilometres!**

▶ **If you look closely, you can just see the customs tag tied to the steering column – that's a nice touch, don't you agree?**

little part of the door that had to be welded – the rest is all original, including the grooved bumpers, wings, grooved aluminium trim, running boards, wiring harness, head- and tail-lights, and so on. Incredibly, the engine is the original, too, and has covered just 66,000km since leaving the factory!

Close up, the car is packed with great details, such as the original customs ('douane') tag tied to the steering column, a card tag behind the fuses telling the owner what their functions are and a neat factory 'vortex' air-cleaner. If you want to know what a brand-new Beetle looked like in October 1951, look no further – grooved bumpers, crotch-coolers, flanged over-riders and 'notched' door window glass: this Beetle has them all.

Claus Missing is certainly one lucky guy, with an enviable collection of classic VWs. Of course, if he ever tires of driving a vintage Beetle, he can always grab the keys to his Split-screen Westy... ●

