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Motoring New Car Road Test

Can the latest Volkswagen Golf

Volkswagen's new Golf GTI has a lot of reputation to uphold – but can it do it? Jack **Evans** finds out

WELL, it needs little introduction, does it? The Volkswagen Golf GTI has been ingrained into the motoring world for decades now, offering a classless appeal that spans generations.

Now, as the Golf moves into its eighth generation, so a new version of the famous GTI appears on our roads.

And like most recent Golfs, this latest GTI arrives with a whole lot of expectation put upon its shoulders.

However, with a new platform and a striking look, the GTI appears to be geared up to impress.

The question is, can it? We've been behind the wheel to find out.

What's new?

Quite a lot is new about this latest Golf GTI, but you can tell that Volkswagen has the bonnet? put a real emphasis on making sure that this latest iteration of its famous hatch is as good to drive as possible. It has, tre turbocharged petrol engine producing which was previously only available on front wheels through a seven-speed auto- up even the dreariest of days. And, for How does it look? vious-generation GTI. It's put in place to al is available, too. celerating out of corners.

We've also got a completely new cabin power and torque. tal side of things but contrasted by some onds while flat-out the GTI will manage



■The wide-stretching front light bar gives the new GTI a futuristic aesthetic

What's under

The Golf GTI utilises a familiar 2.0-li-

from a car in this segment.

What's it like to drive?

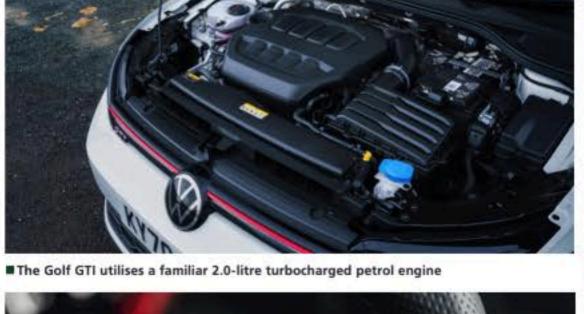
ic appeal. It needs to blend the ability to this is that it's simply not as comfortable to manage the day-to-day driving that we all live with at slower speeds as before. for instance, a locking front differential 242bhp and 370Nm of torque, sent to the do while also adding sparkle that'll liven Performance and TCR versions of the prematic gearbox – though a six-speed manu-the most part, this latest eighth-generation GTI does the job. It's easy and hassle-free give the car even better traction when ac- It matches the output offered by the old to drive at slow speeds (though the ride

key GTI hallmarks like tartan upholstery. 155mph. On the economy side of things, too much of them – a big stab of the throt- still a well-rounded look in terms of out-You can see Volkswagen trying to bring the GTI does well too, with a claimed con-tle on a cold January day causes them to right design which ensures that the GTI as much new tech forward as possible sumption figure of 38.2mpg and CO2 emis-scrabble for grip in first and second gears - won't look out of place wherever it goes. without losing some of those classic GTI sions of 168g/km around what you'd expect but by and large, it manages its power well. It's noticeably similar to the outgoing There's a lot more power than outright Golf around the back, where the dual ex-

numbers suggest, too, with the GTI pulling strongly, particularly in the middle of the rev range. That suspension firmness The experience that you get from behind does mean that the car's body roll is kept the wheel is a core part of the GTI's histor- wonderfully in check, but the by-product of

This latest GTI is a far angrier and fo-GTI Performance models, both in outright stands a little on the firm side) yet the per- cused-looking affair than its predecesformance on offer is more than enough to sor, with its sharp front headlights and with a far greater emphasis on the digi- Zero to 60mph takes a claimed six sec- add a dash of adrenaline when you need it. wide-stretching front light bar giving it a Yes, the front tyres do struggle if you ask futuristic and eye-catching aesthetic. It's







■ The steering wheel has touch controls



■The new GTI does well on boot space



There's a completely new cabin with a far greater emphasis on the digital side of things

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GTI move the game forward?

haust pipes take pride of place at either side of a black diffuser-style trim piece. The GTI badge has moved from the side of the boot lid to the centre, and though this does put more emphasis on the name, we preferred the understated way it was shuffled to one side previously.

What's it like inside?

Get into the GTI's cabin and you're met with high-quality materials and an area which is dominated by screens and controls. The part-haptic steering wheel controls are a slight negative from the off as they can prove a little counter-intuitive to use when you're on the move. However, this GTI gets the fundamentals spot on with a good seating position and a decent amount of space for those sitting in the back.

When it comes to boot space it does well too, bringing 374 litres of seats-up space when you lift the rear hatch. You can also extend this by folding down the rear seats, furthering the GTI's practicality creden-

What's the spec like?

As we've seen with the standard car, use and simple to get up to speed with.

though the golfball-effect gear shifter is does, however, bring a comprehensive list car does move things on but in an un- a sure-fit for many.



■ Volkswagen has put a real emphasis on making sure that this latest iteration of its famous hatch is as good to drive as possible

things have taken a seriously digital turn replaced by a small stubby lever for select- of standard equipment which more than expected way; it's somewhat harder and with the Golf GTI. We've got a ten-inch ing gears in this automatic model. Some justifies its £30,677 starting price. digital display ahead of the driver - with of the button layouts can be a touch bewilpleasantly clear and easy-to-read graphics dering – like the rear screen heater button located to the right of the driver next to the which handles all of the infotainment jobs. window controls - while the main heat-All the major interaction points are easy to ing and ventilation controls being located within the infotainment system can make a real job on its hands to impress could The tartan seats are present and correct, things fiddly from time to time. The GTI be somewhat of an understatement. This pable hot hatch and one which will feel like

To say that this latest GTI arrived with

more focused than before, bringing more excitement into the fold at the detriment to its everyday usability. Some might see that as a bonus, while others who favour a car that'll be soft and pliable when it needs to

Either way, this is still one seriously ca-