

# VW Passat GLX 4Motion Wagon

## Jack of all trades

By Brian Armstead



You are faced with a dilemma when you don't want an SUV but seek the benefits of all-wheel-drive, plus you need to haul the kids, the dog and all your stuff around.

What to do? Boogie on down to your local Volkswagen dealer and test drive the VW Passat GLX 4Motion Wagon.

As we say goodbye to our long term Passat, we'll miss its go-anywhere, do-anything personality.

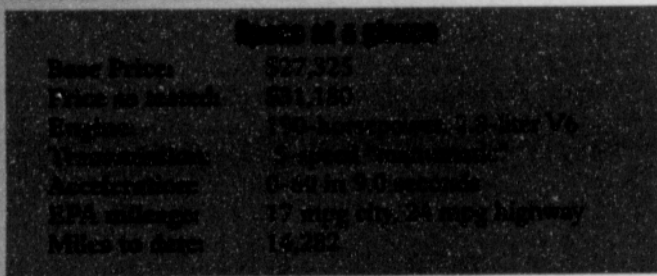
My experience with the 4Motion Passat was positive, but I did notice a bit of drivetrain shudder when starting out in the morning. This phenomenon was noted by Senior Editor Blair Walker in his review of the Passat. My personal Audi, which utilizes a similar all-wheel drive system (quattro), does the same thing, and with over 160,000 miles on the odometer, it

shows no ill effects from this.

Major Passat pluses include room galore for large passengers, superior traction in all weather conditions, supportive leather seats, an innovative sunroof that allows you to dial in the amount of sun you require and a wonderful V6 engine.

One minor negative, which was also noted by Blair Walker - there is no way to shut off the self-dimming rearview mirror. The demographic for the Passat generally does not include very young eyes. VW, give us old folks a break and update this feature.

There has been a resurgence in the popularity of station wagons recently, and there are several fine offerings on the market. But for my money, I'll take the Passat. It is truly German in all respects, which in my dictionary means tight, well built and fun to drive.



# Suzuki Grand Vitara Limited

## Not a bad catch as far as sport-cute utilities go

by Mary M. Chapman



You know how when you're dating someone and early on you're getting decent vibes but you're just not sure yet? Well, enter our long-term review of the Suzuki Grand Vitara. After some 800 miles together, let's just say we're better off as friends. But I have no regrets.

As it turned out, this sport-cute was an uncomplicated sort -- there's something to be said for predictability -- that tended to handle rather nicely in all kinds of climates. Nice road feel, too. Plus, the SUV was smallish enough to zip in and out of tight spots, but not so diminutive that I felt vulnerable. It wasn't bad on the eyes, either.

The power, well, I liked that better early on. As time passed, the 155-horsepower 2.5-liter V6 frustrated me by its lack of pep more than once.

Our relationship was also hampered by a service light that curiously lit up even after the Vitara was serviced, a moody gas cap door, a non-working left-rear seatbelt, rather cramped rear seating, a tough-to-engage four-wheel-drive system, and tiny stereo control buttons that were too sensitive for the bouncy ride of this kind of SUV.

Still, the Grand Vitara is not a bad catch. But I'd hold out for his new bro, the pricier, but longer and presumably smoother riding, Grand Vitara XL-7. On the market come this spring, he sounds more like a keeper.

